DOCUMENT RESUME

ED 200 125 HE 013 609

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TITLE College Student Perceptions Four Year Follow-up: 1973-77, Characteristics of Freshmen Associated with Retention.
INSTITUTION State Univ. of New York, Buffalo. Student Testing and Research Office.
PUB DATE Feb 81
NOTE 76p.
AVAILABLE FROM Student Testing and Research Office, Division of Student Affairs, State University of New York, Buffalo, NY 14214.

EDRS PRICE MF01/PC04 Plus Postage.
DESCRIPTORS Academic Aspiration; *Academic Persistence; *College Freshmen; College Seniors; *Dropout Characteristics; Educational Background; Family Characteristics; Family Influence; Followup Studies; Full Time Students; Higher Education; Institutional Research; Interpersonal Relationship; Occupational Aspiration; Personality Traits; *School Holding Power; Self Evaluation (Individuals); State Universities; Student Adjustment; Student Attitudes; *Student Attrition; *Student Characteristics
IDENTIFIERS *State University of New York Buffalo; Stopouts

ABSTRACT

A four-year followup study of the freshman class of 1973 was conducted at the State University of New York at Buffalo to determine the relationships between student perceptions/characteristics of the incoming freshmen and their retention status. The College Student Perceptions survey, which was administered to incoming freshmen, dealt with such topics as educational experiences/expectations, major and career plans, interpersonal relationships, family, self-assessment, personal goals, and potentially disrupting family events. Information concerning high school class size and standing and grade point average was obtained from student records. A total of 1,666 full-time, regular admissions students completed the survey in 1973. Four years later, 976 students, or 59 percent of the sample were persisters; 599 students (36 percent) had left the university, either dropping out or transferring; and 91 students (5 percent) had stopped taking courses (or had taken two credit hours or less) for at least a semester, then returned on a more full-time basis and were currently enrolled. The responses of these three groups differed significantly for only 67 of 305 survey items and two of 47 free-response items. Those who stopped taking courses for a period were the least satisfied with their high school academic experiences and the least enthusiastic about attending college. Compared to persisters and dropouts/transfers, they rated themselves lower on such traits as dependability, self-discipline, and competitiveness (attributes frequently associated with degree completion). Additional findings are discussed. (SW)

ED200125

COLLEGE STUDENT PERCEPTIONS

FOUR YEAR FOLLOW-UP: 1973-1977

Characteristics of Freshmen Associated with Retention

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Student Testing and Research
Division of Student Affairs
State University of New York at Buffalo
February, 1981

FOREWORD

Student Testing and Research, of the Division of Student Affairs, State University of New York at Buffalo (SUNY/B), conducts research to evaluate the impact of SUNY/B on the personal, social, intellectual, and professional development of its students.[1] An essential aspect of this impact is, of course, the retention/attrition of students.

As interesting as other institutions' research on retention can be, a college's or university's analysis of its own student population relative to variables related to attrition is more useful. Examination of the perceptions, expectations, and assessments of incoming freshmen relative to their retention status four years later provides insights into the interactions of the students with the university environment - insights that suggest possible strategies and programs to help minimize attrition at the University.

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[1] A list of reports of this research, with a brief description of their contents, is available upon request from Student Testing and Research, 316 Harriman Library, State University of New York at Buffalo, Buffalo, New York, 14214.

ACKNOWLEDGMENTS

The author is most grateful for the assistance of the following individuals:

Helen S. Wyant, Research Director, who edited the manuscript and provided thoughtful comment;

Dolores Gerber, Karen Scarborough, and Bradley Seawell, who ably and very patiently prepared the manuscript;

The SUNY/B students, whose response to a lengthy and demanding questionnaire made the report possible.

TABLE OF CONTENTS

FOREWORD iii
ACKNOWLEDGMENTS v
TABLE OF CONTENTS vii
LIST OF TABLES ix

Chapter — Page

I METHOD 1
SAMPLE 1
QUESTIONNAIRE AND ADMISSION DATA 2
DATA ANALYSIS 2
PRESENTATION OF DATA 3

II EDUCATIONAL EXPERIENCES AND EXPECTATIONS 5
HIGH SCHOOL DATA 5
HIGH SCHOOL EXPERIENCES 6
High School Teachers 6
High School Classmates 8
Satisfaction with High School Experiences 8
COLLEGE EXPECTATIONS 11
Attitude about Attending College 12
Degree Expectations 13
SUMMARY 15

III MAJOR AND CAREER CHOICE 17
MAJOR CHOICE 17
CAREER CHOICE 22
Time of Career Decision 23
Work Experiences 23
Certainty of Choice 26
Importance of Career Role 26
CAREER CHARACTERISTICS 26
SUMMARY 30

IV INTERPERSONAL RELATIONSHIPS AND ACTIVITIES 32
FREQUENCY OF ASSOCIATION WITH OTHERS 32
UNDERSTANDING THE VALUES AND BEHAVIOR OF OTHERS 34
COMFORT IN ASSOCIATING WITH OTHERS 36
CONFIDANTS 36
ENJOYMENT OF ACTIVITIES 40
SUMMARY 42

V FAMILY 43
GENERAL INFORMATION 43
COMMUNITY DESCRIPTION 44
FAMILY LIFE 44
RELATIONSHIP WITH MOTHER 46
RELATIONSHIP WITH FATHER 48
SIBLINGS 50
SUMMARY 51

Chapter		Page
VI	SELF-DESCRIPTION	53
	PERSONAL CHARACTERISTICS	53
	RATINGS OF ABILITIES	55
	CONTRIBUTIONS TO A SENSE OF SELF-SATISFACTION	57
	LIFE GOALS	60
	BELIEF IN GOD OR OTHER "LIFE FORCE"	60
	SUMMARY	62
VII	SUMMARY	63
	PERSISTERS	63
	DROPOUTS/TRANSFERS	65
	STOPOUTS	65
	FRESHMAN MAJOR CHOICES	67

LIST OF TABLES

Table		Page
2.1	High School Average and Rank in Class	5
2.2	Description of High School Teachers	7
2.3	Description of High School Classmates	9
2.4	Satisfaction with High School Experiences	10
2.5	Percentage of High School Graduating Class That Will Go (or Have Gone) to College	12
2.6	Attitude About Attending College	13
2.7	Intentions to Complete a Baccalaureate at SUNY/B	14
3.1	Faculty of Intended Major Choice and Retention Status Four Years Later	19
3.2	Intended Major Choice and Retention Status Four Years Later	20
3.3	Intended Career Choice and Retention Status Four Years Later	24
3.4	Desirability of Various Job or Career Characteristics	28
4.1	Frequency of Association with Various People	33
4.2	Understanding the Values and Behavior of Various People	35
4.3	Comfort in Associating with Various People	37
4.4	People with Whom Most Personal Feelings are Discussed	38
4.5	People Consulted when Making Important Decisions	39
4.6	Enjoyment of Activities	41
5.1	Description of Family Life	45
5.2	Characteristics of the Student-Mother Relationship	47
5.3	Characteristics of the Student-Father Relationship	49
5.4	Description of Relationships with Siblings	51
6.1	Self-Ratings of Personal Characteristics	54
6.2	Self-Ratings of Abilities	56
6.3	Contributions to a Sense of Self-Satisfaction	59
6.4	Importance of Various Life Goals	61

CHAPTER I

METHOD

The population of interest for this study is the group of 1,949 young men and women who first entered the State University of New York at Buffalo (SUNY/B) in the fall semester of 1973.[1] These students were full-time freshmen and entered the day school program of the University through regular admissions programs.

SAMPLE

All 1973 incoming freshmen were invited to attend one of the twelve conferences of the Summer Orientation Program. Two conferences were conducted each week from July 16 to August 24, 1973; one from noon Monday to 11 A.M. Wednesday, and the other from noon Wednesday to 11 A.M. Friday. The program was designed to familiarize freshmen with the facilities and resources of the University, to help them plan their academic programs and register them for their fall courses, and to provide an opportunity for them to meet other students.

A questionnaire, the *College Student Perceptions Survey* (CSPS) was administered by Student Testing and Research of the Division of Student Affairs on the first day of each conference; 1,666 freshmen, 85 percent of the population, attended the orientation program and completed usable questionnaires. They constitute the sample upon which this report is based. The composition of the sample by sex was the same as that of the population; 60 percent men and 40 percent women.

In July, 1977, four years after they entered SUNY/B as freshmen, 59 percent of the sample, 976 students, were persisters; they had attended continuously,

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[1] This total excludes non-matriculating students and freshmen in the Hospital Nursing Program and Millard Fillmore College, the evening Division of the University. Also excluded are 199 freshmen who were admitted to the University through the Educational Opportunity Program (EOP), a program initiated in 1968 to give special educational opportunities to students with academic deficiencies related to social and economic conditions.

enrolling for three or more credit hours each of the eight semesters. Thirty-six percent, 599 students, had left the University, either dropping out or transferring to another institution. No differentiation between dropouts and transfers was possible since SUNY/B did not have a method for determining which of the students who had not returned had transferred to another educational institution and which no longer attended any college or university. The dropouts and transfers are referred to collectively as d/t's in this study. The remaining five percent, 91 students, were stopouts. They had stopped taking courses (or had taken two credit hours or less) for at least a semester, then returned to the University on a more full-time basis and were currently enrolled.[2]

Interestingly, the three retention groups did not differ significantly in their composition according to sex: each was composed of 60 percent men and 40 percent women.

QUESTIONNAIRE AND ADMISSION DATA

The 1973 *College Student Perceptions Survey* (CSPS) consists of 305 multiple-choice questions and 47 free-response items. The multiple-choice items deal with a wide range of topics including educational experiences and expectations, major and career plans, interpersonal relationships, family, self-assessment, and personal goals. The free-response questions concern potentially disrupting family events and persons responsible for inspiring enjoyment of learning.

High school information regarding class size, average, and class standing and New York Regents Scholarship Examination scores was obtained from records of the Office of Admissions and Records.

DATA ANALYSIS

Responses to each multiple-choice item and free-response question of the 1973 CSPS and the high school data were examined for significant differences among persisters, d/t's, and stopouts. Analysis of variance and the chi-square analysis

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[2]Data compiled from records of the Admissions and Records office.

were employed to investigate the significance of the differences.[3]

At least 97 percent of the sample responded to each of the CSPS items except to the last item and to several groups of questions where response was inappropriate for some students. The last item - "the importance of Definition of a realistic and satisfying philosophy of life as a goal in your life" - was separated slightly in the questionnaire from 11 similar items causing it, perhaps, to be overlooked by some students (95 percent of the students did respond to the item). Responses to questions concerning reasons for major choice and baccalaureate and postbaccalaureate degree expectations were appropriate for and recorded for only those students having made a major choice or expecting baccalaureate or postbaccalaureate degrees. Similarly, responses concerning relationships with mother, father, or siblings were recorded by only those students who indicated that they had those types of relationships.

PRESENTATION OF DATA

This report focuses on the differences in responses among persisters, d/t's, and stopouts. Where differences are not found, the highlights of the total sample's responses to individual questions are discussed in the text and the total group's responses to a list of all related items is presented in the tables. Tables include information additional to that in the text. Data are presented in tables as percentages, means, and standard deviations. Means of the response options are calculated by assigning the number 1 to the most negative response option, 2 to the next most negative, etc..

The following symbols and abbreviations are used in the figures and tables:

P	Persisters	SD	Standard deviation
D/t's	Dropouts/transfers	M	Mean
S	Stopouts	N	Number of respondents

In tables with mutually exclusive entries, some columns of percents may not add to 100 due to non-response and/or rounding error. The significant differences and the method of analysis employed are reported in the tables.

In the text, only those differences determined to be significant by statistical tests are discussed. The terms "respondents," "freshmen," "students," and

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[3]Significant differences at the .05 level of confidence are reported.

"sample" are used interchangeably. The word Faculty, when capitalized, refers to one of the seven academic units at SUNY/B in 1973;[4] when not capitalized, it refers to teaching staff at the University.

In many sections of the questionnaire, students were instructed to use a designated response scale in responding to each of a list of related statements or expressions. When the information from these sections is reported in the study, the response options available to the students are noted in *script*; the statements or phrases to which the students responded are noted by capitalization of the first letter in the first word of the statement.

Proportions, such as one-third and three-quarters, are used for simplicity and convenience. They are sometimes approximations, but are always within two percent of the actual percents shown in the tables unless qualified.

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[4]Six units used the designation, "Faculty," one, "School."

CHAPTER II

EDUCATIONAL EXPERIENCES AND EXPECTATIONS

As entering freshmen, students in the sample were asked about their high school experiences and college degree expectations in order to investigate some of the differences among their educational experiences and expectations before entering SUNY/B, and to establish a basis for comparisons in follow-up studies.

HIGH SCHOOL DATA

Admissions data indicate that dropouts/transfers (referred to collectively as d/t's) and stopouts had slightly lower high school averages and ranked slightly lower in their high school classes than did persisters (Table 2.1). Although these differences are statistically significant, they are not substantial. The three groups of students did not differ significantly in the size of their high school class (mean class size 474), or in the scores they achieved on the New York Regents Scholarship Examination (mean score, 202 of a possible 300).

Table 2.1 HIGH SCHOOL AVERAGE AND RANK IN CLASS[a]

	Persisters			Dropouts/Transfers			Stopouts		
	N	M	SD	N	M	SD	N	M	SD
High School Average	950	89.8	3.9	577	89.2	4.9	88	88.7	7.2
Rank in Class	916	87.6	11.1	560	85.5	13.2	83	86.6	9.5

[a]Persisters, d/t's and stopouts differed significantly ($p \leq .05$, analysis of variance).

HIGH SCHOOL EXPERIENCES

Eighty-one percent of the entering freshmen had graduated from public high schools. Seventeen percent had graduated from private, religious schools, while fewer than one percent entered the University from private, non-religious high schools or had earned a high school diploma by an equivalency examination. About two-thirds (63 percent) of the students felt that the administrators in their high school had understood them; 71 percent stated that one or more of their high school administrators or counselors had shown an interest in them as individuals. Persisters, d/t's and stopouts did not differ significantly as freshmen in their responses to these three items.

High School Teachers

The students indicated the proportion of their high school teachers described by each of 18 listed adjectives and behaviors (Table 2.2). Responses were noted on a five-point scale: *none*, *one*, *a few*, *quite a few*, and *many or most*. Each of the descriptions, all positive behaviors or characteristics, was attributed by three-quarters or more of the sample to at least a few of their high school teachers.

It is disheartening that fewer than a half of the students stated that *many or most* of their teachers possessed three of the basic prerequisites for teaching. Only 49 percent of the students indicated that *many or most* were Knowledgeable about the subject taught, while only 38 percent said *many or most* were Well-prepared for class. Surprisingly, only eight percent of the students stated that *many or most* of their high school teachers were Skilled in communicating subject matter to students.

The characteristics descriptive of the fewest high school teachers were that they were Intellectually stimulating and Creative. A fifth of the students attributed these characteristics to *none* or only *one* of their high school teachers.

Persisters, d/t's, and stopouts differed in their responses to only one of the 18 items. Proportionately more of the stopouts than persisters or d/t's indicated that *many or most* of their high school teachers were Interested in them as individuals. This response was indicated by 16 percent of the stopouts, nine percent of the persisters, and seven percent of the d/t's. Interestingly, a larger proportion of stopouts (8 percent) than persisters or d/t's (5 percent each) said that no teacher had shown an interest in them.

Table 2.2 DESCRIPTION OF HIGH SCHOOL TEACHERS[a]

DESCRIPTION	Proportion of Teachers				
	None	One	A Few	Quite A Few	Many or Most
Knowledgeable about the subject taught	<1%	1%	16%	34%[b]	49%[b]
Friendly	1	<1	19	39	41
Well-prepared for class	1	2	21	38	38
Encouraged student participation in class	1	2	26	35	35
Available to you for help	3	6	36	24	30
Fair	<1	1	32	40	27
Showed respect for you	2	6	38	30	23
Enthusiastic about the subject taught	1	5	39	36	20
Displayed a good sense of humor	1	4	45	37	12
Understanding	<1	3	49	35	12
Interesting as persons	1	3	55	31	11
Challenged you to perform your best	10	17	47	17	10
Interested in you as an individual[c]	5	13	52	21	9
Persisters	*5*	*15*	*51*	*21*	*9*
D/t's	*5*	*11*	*56*	*21*	*7*
Stopouts	*8*	*15*	*37*	*23*	*16*
Skilled in communicating subject matter to students	1	4	56	31	8
Open-minded	2	6	56	29	7
Flexible	2	7	65	21	5
Creative	4	14	65	14	4
Intellectually stimulating	5	16	60	14	4

[a]At least 99 percent of the sample responded to each item.

[b]Percent of respondents who indicated that the behavioral characteristic described that proportion of their high school teachers.

[c]Persisters, d/t's, and stopouts differed significantly ($p \leq .05$, chi square analysis).

High School Classmates

Using the same response scale, students specified for what proportion of their high school classmates each of 14 listed adjectives or behaviors were descriptive (Table 2.3). The characteristics most descriptive of their high school classmates were, in descending order:

Friendly
Respected you
Displayed a good sense of humor.

Responses indicated that the characteristics related to academics were the least typical of their classmates. These characteristics were:

Challenged you to perform your best
Intellectually stimulating
Enthusiastic about learning
Well-prepared for classes.

Thirty-eight percent stated that *none* or only *one* of their high school classmates Challenged them to perform their best, while 10 to 15 percent responded similarly regarding the other three academic characteristics.

As freshmen, the three groups differed in their responses to two items. Forty percent of the stopouts stated that *many or most* Respected them, while only 28 percent of the persisters and 32 percent of the d/t's so responded. Persisters indicated that fewer of their classmates Displayed a good sense of humor than was specified by the d/t's and stopouts. Twenty-two percent of the persisted noted that *many or most* of their classmates Displayed a good sense of humor, while 27 percent of both the d/t's and stopouts responded similarly.

Satisfaction with High School Experiences

The sample were asked how satisfied they were with various aspects of their high school experience: academic and social experiences, relationships, and degrees of initiative and participation (Table 2.4). Responses were indicated on a four-point scale ranging from *very dissatisfied* to *very satisfied*. Student responses indicated that they were *moderately* to *very satisfied* with all of the experiences except one. They were most satisfied with:

Relationship with peers
Degree of initiative they took in establishing relationships with their peers
Academic experience.

They were the least satisfied with their Relationships with administrators; half of the sample stated that they were *moderately* to *very dissatisfied* with those relationships.

Table 2.3 DESCRIPTION OF HIGH SCHOOL CLASSMATES[a]

DESCRIPTION	Proportion of Classmates				
	None	One	A Few	Quite A Few	Many or Most
Friendly	<1%[b]	<1%[b]	16%[b]	40%[b]	44%[b]
Respected you[c]	<1	1	28	40	30
Persisters	*<1*	*1*	*29*	*42*	*28*
D/t's	*1*	*1*	*27*	*38*	*33*
Stopouts	*1*	*1*	*22*	*37*	*40*
Displayed a good sense of humor[c]	<1	1	26	49	24
Persisters	*<1*	*1*	*24*	*52*	*22*
D/t's	*<1*	*2*	*28*	*42*	*27*
Stopouts	*0*	*1*	*23*	*49*	*27*
Fun to be with	<1	1	35	41	23
Fair	<1	2	32	43	22
Cooperative	<1	1	40	40	18
Open-minded	1	2	42	37	18
Bright	<1	1	37	47	15
Active in school life	2	3	54	32	10
Creative	1	3	57	32	7
Well-prepared for classes	3	7	61	24	5
Enthusiastic about learning	5	8	63	20	4
Intellectually stimulating	6	9	63	19	4
Challenged you to perform your best	25	13	45	12	4

[a]At least 99 percent of the sample responded to each item.

[b]Percent of the respondents who indicated that the behavioral characteristic described that proportion of their high school classmates.

[c]Persisters, d/t's, and stopouts differed significantly ($p \leq .05$, chi-square analysis.

Table 2.4 SATISFACTION WITH HIGH SCHOOL EXPERIENCES[a]

	Very Dissatisfied	Moderately Dissatisfied	Moderately Satisfied	Very Satisfied	M	SD
Your relationship with students of your sex	1%	6%	48%	43%	3.36	.64
Degree of initiative you took in establishing relationships with students your age	1	10	47	40	3.28	.70
Your academic experience[b,c]	3	11	54	31	3.13	.83
Persisters	*3*	*10*	*52*	*34*	*3.18*	*.73*
D/t's	*4*	*12*	*56*	*27*	*3.07*	*.75*
Stopouts	*2*	*19*	*58*	*21*	*2.98*	*.70*
Your relationship with students of the other sex	5	13	43	36	3.13	.83
Your relationship with teachers	3	15	53	28	3.07	.75
Degree of initiative you took in establishing relationships with students of the other sex	5	17	43	32	3.04	.85
Degree of participation in extracurricular activities	5	22	36	34	3.03	.89
Your social experience	6	17	45	31	3.02	.85
Degree of initiative you took in establishing relationships with faculty/administrators	5	20	48	26	2.97	.81
Degree of effort you invested in your academic work[c]	6	22	44	27	2.97	.81
Persisters	*5*	*20*	*44*	*29*	*2.98*	*.84*
D/t's	*7*	*23*	*45*	*25*	*2.89*	*.85*
Stopouts	*11*	*25*	*37*	*25*	*2.78*	*.96*
Your relationship with administrators	22	27	36	14	2.41	.99

Note. Differences among the responses of the three retention groups were analyzed by analysis of variance techniques and chi square analysis. Mean responses are calculated according to the following scale: 1 = very dissatisfied; 2 = moderately dissatisfied; 3 = moderately satisfied; 4 = very satisfied.

[a] At least 97 percent of the sample responded to each item.

[b] Persisters, d/t's, and stopouts differed significantly ($p \leq .05$, chi square analysis).

[c] Persisters, d/t's, and stopouts differed significantly ($p \leq .05$, analysis of variance).

The freshmen differed in their degree of satisfaction in two areas. Persisters were more satisfied with their high school Academic experience and with the Degree of effort they invested in their academic work than were the d/t's and stopouts. D/t's were more satisfied with their high school Academic experience and the Degree of effort they expended than were the stopouts. A third of the persisters indicated that they were *very satisfied* with their high school Academic experience; a fourth of the d/t's and a fifth of the stopouts responded similarly. Seventy-three percent of the persisters stated that they were *moderately* or *very satisfied* with the Degree of effort they had invested in their academic work, while 70 percent of the d/t's and only 62 percent of the stopouts were. A fifth of the freshmen who later stopped out were *moderately* or *very dissatisfied* with their high school Academic experience and 36 percent were *moderately* or *very dissatisfied* with the Degree of effort they had invested in their academic work.

The freshmen were asked if Anyone had inspired or fostered in them an enjoyment of learning. Very few, two percent, said *No, I don't really enjoy learning.* Almost half, 44 percent, responded in the negative, saying *No, I enjoy learning but I'm not aware of anyone's inspiring or fostering it.* Half said *Yes* and indicated on a check list by whom they were influenced. Teachers were most frequently mentioned; 43 percent of the sample said that they were influenced by their teachers. Parents were next; mothers and fathers were each indicated by 36 percent. About a tenth mentioned brothers (12 percent) or sisters (11 percent), while between four and six percent indicated uncles and aunts and grandmothers and grandfathers. On the only response where the eventual persisters, d/t's, and stopouts differed, eight percent of the sample said that they were inspired by an author. Proportionately twice as many stopouts as persisters (14 and 7 percent, respectively) said that they were influenced by an author. Nine percent of the d/t's responded similarly.

COLLEGE EXPECTATIONS

Students reported the percentage of students in their high school graduating class that will go (or have gone) to college. Stopouts tended to come from high schools where slightly smaller proportions of their classmates went on to college (Table 2.5). Similar proportions of the stopouts, persisters, and d/t's (42, 41,

and 40 percent, respectively) indicated as freshmen that *75 percent or more* of their high school graduating class had gone or planned to go to college. Slightly fewer stopouts (32 percent) than persisters (36 percent) or d/t's (35 percent) specified that *50 to 74 percent* of their class had planned to go to college. More stopouts (11 percent) than persisters and d/t's (6 and 5 percent, respectively) had graduated from high schools where fewer than a quarter of the students had gone to college.

Table 2.5 PERCENTAGE OF HIGH SCHOOL GRADUATING CLASS THAT WILL GO (OR HAVE GONE) TO COLLEGE[a]

	Persisters	D/t's	Stopouts
75 percent or more	41%	40%	42%
50-74 percent	36	35	32
25-49 percent	16	18	15
10-24 percent	6	5	8
under 10 percent	<1	<1	3

[a]Persisters, d/t's, and stopouts differed significantly ($p \leq .05$, chi-square analysis).

Attitude about Attending College

Incoming freshmen indicated which of five statements best described their attitude about attending college. The five response options available ranged from *I don't want to attend college, but my parents insist on it*, to *I am enthusiastic about attending college* (Table 2.6). While persisters, d/t's, and stopouts all generally had positive attitudes about attending college, the three groups did differ significantly. The persisters were the most positive and enthusiastic about attending college. The d/t's were slightly less positive, and stopouts were least enthusiastic about going to college. A third of both the persisters and d/t's said they were *enthusiastic about attending college*, while only a quarter of the stopouts responded similarly. Fifty-eight percent of the persisters and 55 percent of the d/t's and stopouts selected the response, *I am looking forward to college - I think it will be tough but the reward will be worth the effort. Everything considered, there is nothing I would prefer doing.* Interestingly, 14 percent of the stopouts said that *there is something else I would prefer doing, but I think college is necessary these days, so I will attend.* Only eight and nine percent of the persisters and d/t's, respectively, so responded. Two

students indicated that *I don't want to attend college, but my parents insist on it*; one eventually dropped out or transferred, the other stopped out.

Table 2.6 ATTITUDE ABOUT ATTENDING COLLEGE[a]

	Persisters	D/t's	Stopouts
I am enthusiastic about attending college	32%	32%	25%
I am looking forward to college - I think it will be tough but the reward will be worth the effort. Everything considered, there is nothing I would prefer doing.	58	55	55
There's something else I would prefer doing, but I think college is necessary these days, so I will attend.	8	9	14
I really don't want to attend college, but I don't know what else I could do that would be satisfactory.	2	4	4
I don't want to attend college, but my parents insist on it.	0	<1	1

[a]Persisters, d/t's, and stopouts differed significantly ($p \leq .05$, chi-square analysis.

Degree Expectations

The students were asked if they intended to complete a bachelor's degree. Those who planned to do so were asked (a) if they intended to complete it at SUNY/B and (b) when they intended to complete their baccalaureate. The freshmen were also questioned about their intentions to obtain a degree beyond a baccalaureate. Those who said they were indicated the highest degree they intended to obtain and when they intended to complete that degree.

Nearly all the incoming freshmen, 95 percent, stated that they intended to complete at least a baccalaureate. Fewer than one percent said that they did not; four percent were not sure.

Persisters, d/t's, and stopouts differed as incoming freshmen in their intentions of completing a baccalaureate at SUNY/B. Persisters were the most definite in their plans to complete the degree at SUNY/B, stopouts the least (Table 2.7). Two-thirds of the persisters said that they intended to complete a baccalaureate at SUNY/B, while 58 percent of the d/t's and only half of the stopouts responded similarly.

Table 2.7 INTENTIONS TO COMPLETE A BACCALAUREATE AT SUNY/B[a]

	Persisters	D/t's	Stopouts
Yes	66%	58%	49%
Not Sure	28	34	38
No	2	2	5

[a]Persisters, d/t's, and stopouts differed significantly ($P \leq .05$, chi-square analysis).

Two-thirds of the freshmen indicated that they intended to complete their baccalaureate at some institution *in 4 years (May or June, 1977)*. Six percent intended to complete it *in fewer than 4 years*, while another six percent stated that they intended to do so *in more than 4 years because I'm in a five-year program*. An additional two percent said they intended to do so *in more than 4 years even though I'm in a four-year program*, while 15 percent were not sure when they would complete their baccalaureate. There were no significant differences in responses among the three retention groups.

Those freshmen who intended to complete a baccalaureate (95 percent of the sample) were also asked if they intended to obtain a degree beyond the baccalaureate, 6 percent said *no*, and 39 percent were *not sure*. Those who replied in the affirmative were also asked to indicate their highest degree expectations and their timetable for completion. A quarter of the students who intended to obtain a postbaccalaureate degree intended to obtain a *master's degree* (13 percent of the sample), while the same portion intended to obtain a *doctorate*. A third intended to obtain a medical degree (17 percent of the sample): *M.D.*, *D.O.*, *D.D.S.*, or *D.V.M.*, while 13 percent (7 percent of the sample) intended to obtain a *law degree*. Among those students intending to obtain a postbaccalaureate, responses of those who persisted, dropped out/transferred, or stopped out did not differ significantly.

Those students intending to obtain a postbaccalaureate indicated when they intended to complete their highest degree. The largest proportion of these students, 37 percent (18 percent of the sample) intended to complete their highest degree *within eight years* of entering the University as freshmen. Thirteen percent of these students (6 percent of the sample) said they would complete their highest degree *within six years*, while six percent (3 percent of the sample) stated that they would complete it *within five years*. Twelve percent (6 percent of the sample) stated that they would complete their highest degree *within ten*

years of entering the University as freshmen. A third of the freshmen (16 percent of the sample) intending to complete a postbaccalaureate were not sure of their timetable for completing their highest degree. There were no significant differences in responses among the students in the three retention groups who intended to obtain a postbaccalaureate degree.

SUMMARY

As entering freshmen, the students were asked about their high school experiences and college degree expectations to examine some of the differences among their educational experiences and expectations before entering SUNY/B. Admissions and Records data revealed that d/t's and stopouts had only slightly lower high school averages and ranked only slightly lower in their high school classes than did persisters. While these differences were statistically significant, they were not substantial.

Relatively more stopouts than persisters and d/t's came from high schools where slightly smaller proportions of their classmates went on to college. These students also perceived that more of their teachers were interested in them as individuals and more of their classmates respected them. Stopouts, however, were the least satisfied of the three groups with their high school academic experience and the degree of effort they had invested in their academic work. While all three retention groups generally had positive attitudes about attending college, stopouts were slightly less enthusiastic about attending.

While the three groups did not differ in their intentions of completing a baccalaureate, as entering freshmen, proportionately more persisters than d/t's and stopouts planned to complete a baccalaureate at SUNY/B. This is very useful information. By identifying as freshmen those who said that they were not sure of completing their baccalaureate at this University, 42 percent of the d/t's and 51 percent of the stopouts could have been reached before they dropped out or transferred, or stopped out. Identification of these entering students could be accomplished by a survey, or by contact with faculty or academic advisors. Reasons for not planning to obtain a baccalaureate at the University could then be determined and programs and procedures designed to decrease stopping out, and increase the retention of potential dropouts and transfers in cases where stopping out, dropping out or transferring might not be most advantageous to

the students.

Interestingly, persisters, d/t's, and stopouts did not differ in their expectations of attaining a postbaccalaureate degree.

CHAPTER III

MAJOR AND CAREER CHOICE

In 1973, the entering freshmen provided information about their major and career choices. Investigation of the subsequent retention status of the students with various initial choices may provide fertile areas for inquiry relative to student retention.

MAJOR CHOICE

From a list of 66 degree programs available at SUNY/B in 1973, the freshmen indicated their intended undergraduate majors. Options were also provided for students to indicate that they planned a special (individualized) major or that they were undecided as to their major choice. More than three-fourths of the freshmen (78 percent) indicated a major choice. Thirteen percent were undecided; eight percent did not respond.

It is important to remember that the major choices discussed in this study were indicated by the entering freshmen on the CSPS questionnaire in the summer before they first entered the University. While these choices may not have been the students' eventual majors, they do signify a definite interest on the part of the entering freshmen in the specified majors.

With the exception of Nursing, Engineering, Music, and Studio Art, students are accepted into the individual departments at SUNY/B at the end of their sophomore year upon fulfillment of departmental requirements. The Nursing Department accepts a third of its students into the department at the time of their admission into the University. Students intending to major in Engineering are affiliated with the School of Engineering upon registration for their first Engineering courses, but are not accepted into the individual departments until the end of their sophomore year; departmental acceptance is dependent upon satisfactory completion of specific courses. Acceptance into the Music Department is based on an evaluative audition at the beginning of the first semester. Admission into the Studio program of the Art Department is conditional upon completion

of a year of required courses and approval of a portfolio of specific work.

Information about retention of freshmen at SUNY/B relative to their initial interest in a major can be important to departments and to the University. The attrition rate of the University could be lowered and, perhaps more importantly, the attrition rates of individual departments could be changed by early identification of freshmen interested in those fields and cultivation of relationships with those students. Freshmen interested in each department can be identified before they enter the University, by information they provide to the Office of Admissions and Records and Academic Advisement. Relationships between those interested students and the faculty, staff, and administrators of the respective departments could be established so that information can be exchanged, friendships formed, and support systems built. These networks of communication and support could help not only in retaining students but also in providing more detailed information regarding the reasons for stopping out, dropping out, and transferring associated with each department.

The majors selected by the incoming freshmen in 1973 were grouped according to the appropriate Faculties. Examination, after four years, of the retention status of the students by the Faculty affiliated with their initially intended major reveals areas of relatively high and low retention of these students in the University (Table 3.1). The retention rates of students intending majors in three of the Faculties deviated substantially from the sample as a whole, in which 59 percent persisted, 36 percent dropped out or transferred, and 5 percent stopped out and then returned on a more full-time basis. The rates also varied considerably among departments within Faculties and Schools (Table 3.2).

Those students whose intended majors as entering freshmen were in the School of Management or in the Faculty of Engineering and Applied Sciences were more likely to persist at SUNY/B (although not necessarily in their intended majors) than were the students in general, while freshmen whose major choices were in the Faculty of Arts and Letters were less likely to do so. Seventy percent of the the 54 entering freshmen whose major choice was Management persisted; 28 percent dropped out or transferred, and only one student stopped out. Sixty-eight percent of the 154 entering freshmen who had intended a major in the Faculty of Engineering persisted; 29 percent dropped out or transferred, and three percent stopped out. Examination of the individual major choices within the Faculty of Engineering reveals that the freshmen who selected Engineering Science and Electrical Engineering as their major choices were particularly likely to persist at the University (83 and 79 percent, respectively) while three of the four

Table 3.1 FACULTY OF INTENDED MAJOR CHOICE AND RETENTION STATUS FOUR YEARS LATER

	N[a]	Persisters		D/t's		Stopouts	
		N	%[b]	N	%[b]	N	%[b]
TOTAL SAMPLE	1666	976	59	599	36	91	5
Natural Sciences and Mathematics	399	250	63	130	33	19	5
Health Sciences	302	163	54	131	43	8	3
Social Sciences and Administration	170	101	59	59	35	10	6
Engineering and Applied Sciences	154	105	68	45	29	4	3
Arts and Letters	101	42	42	46	46	13	13
Management	54	38	70	15	28	1	2
Educational Studies	33	20	61	12	36	1	3
Other							
Undecided	218	124	57	79	36	15	7
Double major	68	34	50	30	44	4	6
Ad Hoc (Individualized) major	27	15	56	10	37	2	7
No response	140	84	60	42	30	14	10

[a]Number of 1973 incoming freshmen whose intended major choice was in each Faculty.

[b]Percent of students whose intended freshman major was in each Faculty and who were in the respective retention groups four years after entering SUNY/B as freshmen.

Table 3.2

INTENDED MAJOR CHOICE AND RETENTION STATUS
FOUR YEARS LATER

MAJOR (Faculty and Department)	N[a]	Persisters[b]		D/t's[b]		Stopouts[b]	
		N	%	N	%	N	%
TOTAL	1666	976	59	599	36	91	5
Arts and Letters							
American Studies	1	0	0	1	100	0	0
Architecture and Environmental Design	32	14	44	13	41	5	16
Art	3	2	67	1	33	0	0
Art Education	3	1	33	2	67	0	0
Art History	0	0	0	0	0	0	0
Fine Art	5	0	0	5	100	0	0
Studio Art	3	2	67	1	33	0	0
Classics	0	0	0	0	0	0	0
English	20	6	30	11	55	3	15
French	10	3	30	5	50	2	20
German	3	2	67	0	0	1	33
Italian	0	0	0	0	0	0	0
Music	6	3	50	3	50	0	0
Music Education	7	4	57	2	29	1	14
Music History	0	0	0	0	0	0	0
Music Performance	4	3	75	1	25	0	0
Russian	1	0	0	0	0	1	100
Spanish	2	1	50	1	50	0	0
Theater	1	1	100	0	0	0	0
Subtotal	*101*	*42*	*42*	*46*	*46*	*13*	*13*
Educational Studies							
Education	7	3	43	4	57	0	0
Business Education	18	13	72	4	22	1	6
Childhood and Elementary Education	1	0	0	1	100	0	0
Health Education	0	0	0	0	0	0	0
Health, Physical Education and Recreation	5	3	60	2	40	0	0
Teaching of Science	2	1	50	1	50	0	0
Subtotal	*33*	*20*	*61*	*12*	*36*	*1*	*3*
Engineering and Applied Sciences							
Engineering	57	36	63	20	35	1	2
Aerospace	1	0	0	1	100	0	0
Chemical	15	9	60	5	33	1	7
Civil	15	11	73	4	27	0	0
Electrical	33	26	79	7	21	0	0
Engineering Science	12	10	83	2	17	0	0
Industrial	3	2	67	1	33	0	0
Mechanical	14	10	71	2	14	2	14
Nuclear	4	1	25	3	75	0	0
Subtotal	*154*	*108*	*68*	*45*	*29*	*4*	*3*
Health Sciences							
Biochemical Pharmacology	5	4	80	1	20	0	0
Biochemistry	26	12	46	11	42	3	12
Medical Technology	34	13	38	20	59	1	3
Medicinal Chemistry	16	8	50	7	44	1	6
Nursing	57	36	63	20	35	1	2
Occupational Therapy	28	16	57	12	43	0	0
Pharmaceutics	3	1	33	2	67	0	0
Pharmacy	73	41	56	31	42	1	1
Physical Therapy	60	32	53	27	45	1	2
Subtotal	*302*	*163*	*54*	*131*	*43*	*8*	*3*

MAJOR (Faculty and Department)	N[a]	Persisters[b]		D/t's[b]		Stopouts[b]	
		N	%	N	%	N	%
TOTAL	1666	976	59	599	36	91	5
Natural Sciences and Mathematics							
Biology	226	148	65	70	31	8	4
Chemistry	58	36	62	17	29	5	9
Computer Science	29	15	52	13	45	1	3
Geological Sciences	2	1	50	1	50	0	0
Mathematics	54	32	59	19	35	3	6
Mathematics-Economics	9	7	78	0	0	2	22
Physics and Astronomy	14	7	50	7	50	0	0
Statistics	7	4	57	3	43	0	0
Subtotal	*399*	*250*	*63*	*130*	*22*	*19*	*5*
Social Sciences and Administration							
Anthropology	6	6	100	0	0	0	0
Black Studies	0	0	0	0	0	0	0
Economics	7	4	57	3	43	0	0
Geography	0	0	0	0	0	0	0
History	18	14	78	4	22	0	0
Linguistics	1	1	100	0	0	0	0
Philosophy	4	0	0	4	100	0	0
Political Science	49	30	61	12	24	7	14
Psychology	52	26	50	23	44	3	6
Social Policy and Community Services (Social Work)	10	4	40	6	60	0	0
Sociology	8	7	88	1	13	0	0
Speech Communication	2	0	0	2	100	0	0
Speech Education	2	2	100	0	0	0	0
Speech Pathology	11	7	64	4	36	0	0
Subtotal	*170*	*101*	*59*	*59*	*35*	*10*	*6*
School of Management	*54*	*38*	*70*	*15*	*28*	*1*	*2*
Other							
Ad Hoc (Individualized) Major	27	15	56	10	37	2	7
Double	68	34	50	30	44	4	6
Undecided	218	124	57	79	36	15	7
No Response	*140*	*84*	*60*	*42*	*30*	*14*	*10*

[a]Number of 1973 incoming freshmen who selected each major choice.

[b]Number and percent of students whose intended freshman major was in each department and who were in the respective retention groups four years after entering SUNY/B as freshmen.

students who intended to major in Nuclear Engineering dropped out or transferred.

Students whose major choices as entering freshmen were in the Faculty of Arts and Letters were less apt to remain at SUNY/B for four years than were students interested in majors in other Faculties. Only 42 percent persisted while nearly half (46 percent) dropped out or transferred, and a relatively large percentage, 13 percent, left the University and later returned. Forty-four percent of the 32 freshmen intending Architecture and Environmental Design as a major persisted, 41 percent dropped out or transferred, and 16 percent stopped out.[1] Only 30 percent of the 20 students who intended to major in English persisted at SUNY/B, 55 percent dropped out or transferred, and 15 percent stopped out.

The retention rates in several other Faculties in which sizable numbers of the incoming freshmen intended a major were substantially different from that of the general sample. Of incoming freshmen who intended to major in Medical Technology or Biochemistry, both in the Faculty of Health Sciences, only 38 and 46 percent, respectively, persisted. Only half of the incoming freshmen intending to major in Computer Science and Physics and Astronomy in the Faculty of Natural Sciences and Mathematics persisted; most of the remainder dropped out or transferred to another institution.

In the Faculty of Social Sciences, 78 percent of the 18 freshmen whose intended major was History persisted. Only half of the 52 who chose Psychology persisted; 44 percent dropped out or transferred.

Interestingly, the retention in the University of the 218 incoming freshmen who indicated they had not decided on a major was nearly identical to the sample of 1,666 as a whole. Thirty-six percent of each cohort dropped out or transferred; 59 percent of the total sample and 57 percent of the undecided group persisted; five percent of the total sample and seven percent of the undecided group stopped out, returning later within the four years investigated.

CAREER CHOICE

From a list of 63 careers, freshmen indicated their intended choice. Options were also provided for students to write in a choice or to indicate that they were undecided. Three-quarters of the freshmen (77 percent) indicated a career choice,

[1] Although the School of Architecture and Environmental Design is presently a separate administrative entity at SUNY/B, in 1973 it was a department in the Faculty of Arts and Letters.

17 percent reported that they were undecided, and six percent did not respond (Table 3.3). Those who indicated a career choice also indicated: (a) when they had decided upon a career choice; (b) whether or not they had working experience in their career area; and (c) how certain they were that they would keep their career choice.

More students were undecided about a career choice, 276, than selected any single career choice. The most frequently chosen career was physician, selected by 203 freshmen, 12 percent of the sample. Other popular choices were engineer (153, 9 percent of the sample), lawyer (97, 6 percent), and pharmacist or pharmacologist (83, 5 percent). Nine choices were not selected by any students. Surprisingly, not one of the entering freshmen intended to become a guidance, marriage, or vocational counselor, a banker or a financial analyst. Nor did any plan to be a geographer, philosopher, or librarian.

The retention status after four years of students who were undecided about a career choice varied only slightly from that of the overall sample. The retention status of the students who had selected many of the career choices closely paralleled the retention status associated with the corresponding major choices. Students who intended to be engineers, accountants or actuaries were more likely than students in general to persist at SUNY/B for four years. Students planning to be medical technicians or technologists, architects, psychologists, computer programmers or system analysts were less likely to persist at the University. Students whose choices as freshmen were writer, physicist, astronomer, or researcher had the lowest persistance rates for any group of 10 students or more.

Time of Career Decision

Interestingly, of the 77 percent of the sample who indicated a career choice, 13 percent indicated that they had made their decision *in eighth grade or earlier*, while five percent had decided *during this summer* - the summer before they entered college. Nearly half (46 percent) had decided *after eighth grade, but earlier than the last year of high school*. A third (35 percent) of the freshmen reported that they had made their decision *during the last year in high school*. There were no significant differences in the responses of the three retention groups.

Work Experiences

Surprisingly, two-thirds of the freshmen with career choices indicated they had had experience working in their chosen career area. Again, persister, d/t, and stopout groups did not differ in their responses.

Table 3.3

INTENDED CAREER CHOICE AND RETENTION STATUS
FOUR YEARS LATER

	N[a]	Persisters[b]	D/t's[b]	Stopouts[b]
TOTAL SAMPLE	1666	59%	36%	5%
200-300 Freshmen[c]				
Undecided	276	59	33	7
Physician	203	65	30	5
100-199 Freshmen				
Engineer	153	69	27	3
50-99 Freshmen				
Lawyer	97	63	30	7
Pharmacist, pharmacologist	83	55	43	1
Physical therapist	66	50	47	3
Accountant, actuary	62	69	24	6
Nurse	60	63	35	2
25-49 Freshmen				
Dentist	40	63	35	3
Biological scientist	39	54	33	13
Psychologist	36	50	42	8
Architect	33	45	39	15
Teacher - secondary	32	59	41	0
Medical technician, technologist	31	39	52	10
Occupational therapist	28	57	43	0
Computer programmer, systems analyst	27	52	48	0
10-24 Freshmen				
Chemist	24	58	33	8
Mathematician	23	65	35	0
Veterinarian	21	52	38	5
Musician	16	63	31	6
Social worker	15	60	40	0
Speech therapist, or pathologist, audiologist	15	60	33	7
Language interpreter, translator, linguist	14	43	29	29
Writer	14	21	57	21
Administrator - business, government	13	46	54	0
Physicist, astronomer	13	23	69	8
Researcher	12	25	75	0
Artist	10	40	60	0
Ecologist	10	60	40	0

[a]Number of 1973 incoming freshmen who selected each career choice.

[b]Retention status, after four years, of the freshmen who selected each career choice.

[c]Range of number of students indicating the listed career choices.

	N[b]	Persisters	Dropouts/ Transfers	Stopouts
TOTAL SAMPLE	1666	59%	36%	5%
2-9 Freshmen				
Communications (radio, TV, etc.) - announcer, program director, producer	7	29	57	14
Law enforcement officer	6	50	50	0
Anthropologist, archeologist	5	100	0	0
Statistician	5	60	40	0
Geologist	4	50	50	0
Athlete	3	0	67	33
Business - salesperson, buyer	3	67	33	0
Clergy, missionary, theologian	3	67	33	0
Diplomat, foreign service worker	3	100	0	0
Politician	3	67	0	33
Actor, entertainer, stage director	2	50	50	0
Economist	2	100	0	0
Farmer, rancher, natural resource conservationist	2	100	0	0
Government service	2	0	100	0
Optometrist	2	50	50	0
Teacher - elementary	2	100	0	0
Teacher - college or university	2	50	50	0
Technician - electronics, laboratory, etc.	2	50	50	0
1 Freshman				
Administrator - education, health	1	100	0	0
Homemaker	1	0	100	0
Inventor	1	0	100	0
Military officer	1	0	100	0
Personnel manager, industrial relations	1	100	0	0
Secretary, office worker	1	0	100	0
Skilled craftsman	1	100	0	0
Sociologist	1	100	0	0
0 Freshmen				
Banker, financial analyst	0	0	0	0
Counselor - guidance, marriage, vocational	0	0	0	0
Dietician, home economist	0	0	0	0
Geographer	0	0	0	0
Interior decorator, designer, window dresser	0	0	0	0
Librarian	0	0	0	0
Philosopher	0	0	0	0
Pilot	0	0	0	0
Publisher	0	0	0	0
Other	28	57	43	7
No Response	107	56	37	5

Certainty of Choice

The freshmen also specified how certain they were that they would keep their career choice. Nearly two-thirds were certain: 20 percent, *very certain*, and 44 percent, *quite certain*. Thirty percent were *somewhat uncertain*, while only six percent were *very uncertain*. The responses of the three retention groups were not significantly different.

Importance of Career Role

All respondents, whether or not they had indicated a career choice, indicated how important they expected their career role would be in comparison with other roles they might have. The majority of the students in each retention group indicated that they expected *the importance will alternate between a career role and other roles*. However, persisters, d/t's, and stopouts differed in the responses to the other two options. Sixteen percent of the d/t's and 15 percent of the persisters, but only nine percent of the stopouts responded with *I expect my career role will always be more important to me than other roles will be*. Fourteen percent of the stopouts indicated that *I expect my career role will never be more important to me than other roles will be*. Fewer of the persisters (7 percent) and dropouts (10 percent) selected that option.

CAREER CHARACTERISTICS

Freshmen were asked the degree of desirability of each of 21 characteristics in their future jobs or careers (Table 3.4). Responses were on a five-point scale, ranging from *very undesirable* to *essential*.

Nearly half of the characteristics were highly desirable aspects of a job or career. Each of ten characteristics were indicated by four-fifths of the freshmen to be either *essential* or *desirable, but not essential*. They were:

Opportunity to use your abilities or talents fully
Friendly associates
Opportunity to develop professionally
Working with people
Opportunity to contribute directly to the welfare of others
Opportunity to contribute to the improvement of society as a whole
Pleasant physical surroundings
Opportunity to be creative
Opportunity to meet people with whom you might interact socially outside of work
Assured, regulated salary increments, retirement benefits, advancements.

The Opportunity to use their abilities and talents fully was the most desirable career characteristic. Three-quarters of the freshmen considered it to be *essential*.

The least desirable of the characteristics were:

Working with animate things other than people (plants, animals, fish)
Competition with colleagues
Working with inanimate things (objects, equipment, minerals, numbers, etc.).

Each was indicated to be *very undesirable* by a tenth and *somewhat undesirable* by about a fifth. A third or more said that each *did not matter one way or the other*. Each of the three was considered *essential* or *desirable, but not essential* to 28 to 38 percent of the freshmen.

Persisters, d/t's, and stopouts differed in their responses to seven of the 21 characteristics. For four, responses of stopouts and d/t's were very similar and differed somewhat from the responses of the persisters: Friendly associates, Opportunity to meet people with whom you might interact socially outside of work, Income to live in luxury, and Prestige. Each was more desirable to persisters than to the others. While having Friendly associates was desired by nearly all the students, it was an *essential* aspect of a career for two-thirds of the persisters, 59 percent of the stopouts, and 58 percent of the d/t's. The Opportunity to meet people with whom you might interact socially outside of work was *essential* or *desirable, but not essential* to 86 percent of the persisters and to 82 percent of the stopouts and d/t's. This opportunity was *very undesirable* to one percent of the persisters, five percent of the stopouts, and two percent of the d/t's. Income to live in luxury was *essential* or *desirable, but not essential* to 79 percent of the persisters, 73 percent of the stopouts, and 72 percent of the d/t's. Prestige was *essential* or *desirable, but not essential* to 58 percent of the persisters, but only to 52 percent of the stopouts and 53 percent of the d/t's.

Opportunity to be creative was more important to the stopouts than to d/t's and persisters. Creativity was considered *essential* to over half the stopouts, to 44 percent of the d/t's and to 39 percent of the persisters. However, it was *desirable* or *essential* to more than three-fourths of all three retention groups. Assured, regulated salary increments, retirement benefits, and advancement were more desirable to persisters and d/t's than they were to stopouts. These benefits were *essential* or *desirable, but not essential* to 83 percent of the persisters and 80 percent of the d/t's but to only 68 percent of the stopouts.

Responses indicated that Travel (as part of the job) was the most desirable

Table 3.4 DESIRABILITY OF VARIOUS JOB OR CAREER CHARACTERISTICS[a]

CHARACTERISTICS	Very Undesirable	Somewhat Undesirable	It Doesn't Matter One Way or the Other	Desirable, But Not Essential	Essential	M	SD
Opportunity to use your abilities or talents fully	2%	<1%	2%	19%	76%	4.66	.74
Friendly associates[b]	2	<1	3	31	63	4.52	.79
Persisters	2	<1	1	33	63	4.60	.70
D/t's	3	<1	4	35	58	4.46	.85
Stopouts	2	1	3	34	59	4.47	.81
Opportunity to develop professionally	2	<1	8	35	54	4.40	.80
Working with people	2	2	13	31	53	4.31	.89
Opportunity to contribute directly to the welfare of others	1	1	13	48	46	4.28	.82
Opportunity to contribute to the improvement of society as a whole	1	1	12	44	41	4.23	.80
Pleasant physical surroundings	2	1	7	60	30	4.17	.71
Opportunity to be creative[c]	2	3	16	37	42	4.13	.93
Persisters	2	4	17	33	33	4.10	.91
D/t's	2	2	16	35	44	4.18	.82
Stopouts	6	2	12	29	52	4.19	1.03
Opportunity to meet people with whom you might interact socially outside of work[c]	2	1	13	57	28	4.09	.75
Persisters	1	1	12	57	29	4.12	.72
D/t's	2	<1	15	56	26	4.06	.77
Stopouts	6	0	12	53	29	4.00	.96
Assured regulated salary increments, retirement benefits, advancements[c]	3	5	11	47	34	4.04	.97
Persisters	3	4	9	48	35	4.08	.95
D/t's	3	5	12	48	32	4.02	.95
Stopouts	6	3	19	33	35	3.85	1.15
Working with ideas	2	7	17	37	36	3.98	1.01
Opportunity to initiate programs or projects	1	3	23	49	23	3.89	.85

CHARACTERISTICS	Very Undesirable	Somewhat Undesirable	It Doesn't Matter One Way or the Other	Desirable, But Not Essential	Essential	M	SD
Income enough to live in luxury[b,c]	2%	3%	19%	65%	11%	3.81	.74
Persisters	2	2	17	67	12	3.85	.73
D/t's	2	4	22	62	10	3.76	.76
Stopouts	0	8	19	60	13	3.79	.77
Operating pretty much on your own (autonomy)	2	7	21	51	19	3.79	.89
Opportunity to lead or direct others	1	4	34	47	13	3.65	.81
Prestige[b]	4	5	35	46	10	3.54	.87
Persisters	3	4	34	47	11	3.58	.86
D/t's	4	5	37	45	8	3.48	.38
Stopouts	3	10	35	40	12	3.47	.35
Regular working hours	6	16	17	50	12	3.47	1.07
Travel (part of job)[b,c]	5	18	33	40	4	3.18	.96
Persisters	5	20	35	37	3	3.13	.94
D/t's	6	16	30	42	5	3.23	.99
Stopouts	2	13	28	52	4	3.43	.80
Working with inanimate things (objects, equipment, minerals, numbers, etc.)	10	17	37	22	14	3.13	1.15
Competition with colleagues	11	18	33	28	10	3.09	1.13
Working with animate things other than people (plants, animals, fish)	8	21	42	21	7	2.98	1.02

Note. Differences among the responses of the three retention groups were analyzed by analysis of variance techniques and chi square analysis. Mean responses are calculated according to the following scale: 1 = very undesirable; 2 = somewhat desirable; 3 = it doesn't matter one way or the other; 4 = desirable, but not essential; 5 = essential.

[a] At least 99 percent of the sample responded to each item.

[b] Persisters, d/t's, and stopouts differed significantly ($p \leq .05$, analysis of variance).

[c] Persisters, d/t's, and stopouts differed significantly ($p \leq .05$, chi square analysis).

to the stopouts and least desirable to the persisters. Fifty-six percent of the stopouts indicated that Travel (as part of the job) was *essential* or *desirable, but not essential*. Corresponding percentages for d/t's and persisters were 47 and 40 percent, respectively.

SUMMARY

After four years, the retention status in the University of the 1973 entering freshmen was 59 percent persisters, 36 percent dropouts/transfers (d/t's), and 5 percent stopouts. Freshmen who indicated that they intended a major in the School of Management or in the Faculty of Engineering, particularly Engineering Science and Electrical Engineering, had substantially higher persistence rates. Students who intended to major in a department in the Faculty of Arts and Letters, especially English, were more likely to drop out or transfer or to leave the University and return within four years. Freshmen whose choices of major when entering SUNY/B were Medical Technology, Biochemistry, Computer Science, Physics and Astronomy, and Psychology were also more likely than students in general to dropout, transfer, or stopout, while freshmen whose choice was History were more likely to persist.

The attrition rate of the University could be lowered and, perhaps more importantly, the attrition rates of individual departments could be changed by early identification of freshmen interested in those fields and cultivation of relationships with those students. Freshmen interested in each department can be identified before they enter the University by the information they provide the Office of Admissions and Records and Academic Advisement. Relationships between those interested students and the faculty, staff, and administrators of the respective departments could be established so that information can be exchanged, friendships formed and support systems established. These networks of communication and support could help not only in retaining students but also in providing more detailed information regarding the reasons for stopping out, dropping out, and transferring associated with each department.

As entering freshmen, 17 percent of the students were undecided about a career choice. The careers chosen by the largest number of incoming freshmen were physician, engineer, lawyer and pharmacist. Not one intended to become a guidance, marriage, or vocational counselor, a banker or a financial analyst, a geographer,

philosopher, or librarian. The retention status of the students selecting many career choices closely parallels the retention status associated with the corresponding major choices. Those students intending to be engineers, accountants, or actuaries were more likely than students in general to persist, while those students planning to be writers, researchers, physicists/astronomers, medical technicians/technologists, architects, psychologists, or computer programmers/systems analysts were less likely to persist.

Most of the students indicated that the importance of their career roles and other roles would alternate. However, more persisters and d/t's than stopouts indicated that their career roles would be more important to them compared to other roles.

As freshmen, the desirability of friendly associates, opportunity to meet people with whom they might interact outside of work, income to live in luxury, and prestige was important to a larger percentage of persisters than stopouts and d/t's. Stopouts were more desirous than the d/t's and persisters for an opportunity to be creative and for travel (as a part of the job), while assured, regular salary increments, retirement benefits, and advancement were less desirable to stopouts than to the others.

CHAPTER IV

INTERPERSONAL RELATIONSHIPS AND ACTIVITIES

Interpersonal relationships are an essential aspect of human existence. The quality of one's life is a function, to a great extent, of the nature and variety of interpersonal interactions. While positive interactions can be major sources of inspiration, support, and reinforcement, their absence can lead to alienation and loneliness.

Freshmen provided a measure of their interpersonal relationships by indicating: (a) the frequency of their association with various groups of people; (b) how well they understood these people; and (c) how comfortable they were in their associations. These incoming freshmen also indicated with whom they consulted when they had important decisions to make and with whom they felt free to discuss their most personal feelings.

In a related area, students specified how much they enjoyed participating in and/or observing various activities.

FREQUENCY OF ASSOCIATION WITH OTHERS

Students in the sample indicated how frequently they associated with each of nine different groups of people (Table 4.1). Responses were on a five-point scale ranging from *not at all* to *daily, or almost daily*. The students associated most frequently with Peers of the same sex - outside of class or school; they associated the least with Teachers outside of class.

As incoming freshmen, d/t's were more likely than stopouts or persisters to associate with Peers of the other sex, outside of class or school. D/t's were also more likely than persisters to associate with Small children; stopouts were least likely. Stopouts and d/t's were more likely than persisters to associate with People of a different socio-economic background. Stopouts associated with People of a different race more than did d/t's; persisters associated with these individuals the least.

Forty-three percent of the d/t's indicated that they associated *daily, or*

Table 4.1 FREQUENCY OF ASSOCIATION WITH VARIOUS PEOPLE[a]

	Not at All	Rarely	Occasionally	Frequently	Daily or Almost Daily	M	SD
People about your age (peers) of your sex - outside of class or school	<1%	2%	10%	28%	61%	4.47	.74
People of a different religion	2	6	19	32	41	4.05	.99
Peers of the other sex - outside of class or school[b,c]	1	5	23	32	38	4.02	.95
Persisters	*1*	*6*	*25*	*34*	*35*	*3.96*	*.96*
D/t's	*1*	*3*	*20*	*32*	*43*	*4.14*	*.82*
Stopouts	*0*	*5*	*26*	*32*	*36*	*4.00*	*.92*
Adults other than your teachers or parents	1	14	37	28	19	3.50	.99
People of a different socio-economic status[b]	3	20	33	26	18	3.38	1.08
Persisters	*2*	*20*	*34*	*25*	*17*	*3.32*	*1.06*
D/t's	*3*	*17*	*32*	*27*	*21*	*3.46*	*1.03*
Stopouts	*3*	*21*	*24*	*32*	*20*	*3.44*	*1.13*
Small children[b,c]	4	20	38	21	17	3.26	1.08
Persisters	*3*	*22*	*39*	*21*	*15*	*3.22*	*1.06*
D/t's	*4*	*17*	*38*	*22*	*20*	*3.35*	*1.10*
Stopouts	*7*	*23*	*26*	*24*	*14*	*3.11*	*1.17*
People of a different race[b]	6	32	32	17	12	2.96	1.11
Persisters	*7*	*34*	*32*	*16*	*11*	*2.80*	*1.10*
D/t's	*6*	*29*	*34*	*18*	*13*	*3.01*	*1.11*
Stopouts	*5*	*33*	*26*	*22*	*13*	*3.20*	*1.20*
Elderly people	6	38	38	11	6	2.72	.95
Teachers outside of class	21	38	29	10	2	2.33	.98

Note. Differences among the responses of the three retention groups were analyzed by analysis of variance techniques and chi-square analysis. Mean responses are calculated according to the following scale: 1 = not at all; 2 = rarely; 3 = occasionally; 4 = frequently; 5 = daily, or almost daily.

[a]At least 99 percent of the sample responded to each item.

[b]Persisters, d/t's, and stopouts differed significantly ($p \leq .05$, analysis of variance).

[c]Persisters, d/t's, and stopouts differed significantly ($p \leq .05$, chi-square analysis).

almost daily with Peers of the other sex - outside of class or school; a third did so *frequently*. The corresponding percentages for stopouts were 36 and 32, while for persisters they were 35 and 34, respectively.

Half of the stopouts and d/t's reported that they associated *frequently*, or *daily, or almost daily* with People of a different socio-economic status; only 42 percent of the persisters responded similarly. Forty-one percent of the stopouts indicated that they associated *frequently*, or *daily, or almost daily* with People of a different race. Fewer than a third of the d/t's (31 percent) and a fourth of the persisters responded similarly.

Twenty percent of the d/t's indicated that they associated with Small children *daily, or almost daily*. The corresponding percentages for persisters and stopouts were 15 and 14, respectively. More than a third of the stopouts (36 percent) reported that they associated *not at all* or *rarely* with Small children. The corresponding percentages for persisters and d/t's were 25 and 21, respectively.

UNDERSTANDING THE VALUES AND BEHAVIOR OR OTHERS

Freshmen specified how well they understood the values and behavior of each of eight groups of people (Table 4.2). Four response options were available; they ranged from *not well at all* to *very well*. As incoming freshmen, the respondents understood the values and behaviors of Peers of the same sex the best. They understood the values and behaviors of People of a different race and Elderly people the least.

D/t's indicated that they understood the values and behaviors of Peers of the other sex to a slightly greater extent than did stopouts and persisters. Stopouts understood the values and behaviors of People of a different religion to a greater extent than did persisters and d/t's. Ninety-four percent of the stopouts stated that they understood People of a different religion *very well* or *fairly well*. The corresponding percentages for d/t's and persisters were 80 and 78, respectively.

Table 4.2 UNDERSTANDING THE VALUES AND BEHAVIOR OF VARIOUS PEOPLE[a]

	Not At All	Well	Not Very Well	Fairly Well	Very Well	M	SD
Peers, your sex	1%		3%	46%	49%	3.46	.59
Peers of the other sex[b]	2		16	59	22	3.02	.68
Persisters	*3*		*18*	*58*	*21*	*2.99*	*.71*
D/t's	*1*		*14*	*60*	*24*	*3.08*	*.65*
Stopouts	*0*		*18*	*59*	*24*	*3.04*	*.63*
Small children	4		17	57	21	2.97	.73
People of a different religion[c]	3		17	63	16	2.93	.67
Persisters	*4*		*18*	*61*	*17*	*2.92*	*.70*
D/t's	*2*		*18*	*64*	*16*	*2.93*	*.65*
Stopouts	*0*		*7*	*84*	*10*	*3.03*	*.41*
Teachers outside of class	3		25	62	10	2.79	.66
People of a different socio-economic status	5		29	54	11	2.72	.72
Elderly people	7		34	48	10	2.61	.77
People of a different race	10		38	44	7	2.49	.77

Note. Differences among the responses of the three retention groups were analyzed by analysis of variance techniques and chi-square analysis. Mean responses are calculated according to the following scale: 1 = not well at all; 2 = not very well; 3 = fairly well; 4 = very well.

[a]At least 98 percent of the sample responded to each item.

[b]Persisters, d/t's, and stopouts differed significantly ($p \leq .05$, analysis of variance).

[c]Persisters, d/t's, and stopouts differed significantly ($p \leq .05$, chi-square analysis).

COMFORT IN ASSOCIATING WITH OTHERS

The freshmen also specified how comfortable they were in associating with each of 11 different groups of people (Table 4.3). Responses were indicated on a four-point scale ranging from *very uncomfortable* to *very comfortable*. An option was provided for the students to indicate that the question was not applicable for them. As freshmen, the students were most comfortable with Peers of the same sex and least comfortable with Elderly people and People of a different race.

D/t's responses indicated that they were slightly more comfortable than persisters or stopouts in associating with Peers of the other sex, outside of class or school. Half of the d/t's stated that they were *very comfortable* in associating with Peers of the other sex; 37 percent were *fairly comfortable*. Half of the persisters and 40 percent of the stopouts reported that they were *very comfortable* with peers of the other sex, while 35 and 53 percent of the persisters and stopouts, respectively, indicated that they were *fairly comfortable* with these peers.

CONFIDANTS

The freshmen were asked if there were one or more persons in each of six groups of people with whom they felt free to discuss their most personal feelings (Table 4.4) and with whom they consulted when they had an important decision to make (Table 4.5). Response options available were *no* and *yes*.

D/t's indicated more frequently than did persisters and stopouts that (a) they felt free to discuss their personal feelings with Peers of the other sex and (b) they consulted with Peers of the other sex when they had an important decision to make. Sixty-nine percent of the d/t's indicated that there was one or more Peer of the other sex with whom they felt free to discuss their most personal feelings. The corresponding percentages for persisters and stopouts were 63 and 62. Two-thirds of the d/t's also indicated that there was one or more Peer of the other sex that they consulted when they had an important decision to make. Fifty-eight percent of the stopouts and persisters responded similarly.

Response of persisters indicated that they related better with the Parent of their sex than did the d/t's and stopouts. Forty-five percent of the persisters reported that they felt free to discuss their most personal feelings with the

Table 4.3 COMFORT IN ASSOCIATING WITH VARIOUS PEOPLE[a]

PEOPLE	Not Applicable	Very Uncomfortable	Somewhat Uncomfortable	Fairly Comfortable	Very Comfortable	M	SD
Peers of your sex	<1%	2%	2%	23%	73%	3.67	.61
People of a different religion	2	1	3	41	53	3.48	.63
Small children	1	3	9	35	52	3.38	.77
Parent of your sex	2	3	10	33	52	3.37	.78
Peers of the other sex[b]	<1	2	11	37	50	3.36	.75
Persisters	*<1*	*2*	*13*	*35*	*50*	*3.34*	*.76*
D/t's	*<1*	*2*	*9*	*37*	*52*	*3.39*	*.74*
Stopouts	*<1*	*0*	*7*	*53*	*40*	*3.33*	*.60*
Parent of the other sex	2	3	11	37	47	3.32	.78
Adults other than parents or teachers	1	1	8	58	32	3.22	.64
People of a different socio-economic status	5	2	11	52	30	3.16	.70
Teachers outside of class	5	2	16	49	28	3.08	.74
People of a different race	4	4	21	52	20	2.92	.75
Elderly people	1	4	27	49	19	2.83	.78

Note. Differences among the responses of the three retention groups were analyzed by analysis of variance techniques and chi-square analysis. Mean responses are calculated according to the following scales: 1 = very uncomfortable; 2 = somewhat uncomfortable; 3 = fairly comfortable; 4 = very comfortable.

[a]At least 98 percent of the sample responded to each item.

[b]Persisters, d/t's, and stopouts differed significantly ($p \leq .05$, chi-square analysis).

Table 4.4 PEOPLE WITH WHOM MOST PERSONAL FEELINGS ARE DISCUSSED[a]

	No	Yes	M	SD
Peers of your sex	19%	81%	1.81	.39
Peers of the other sex[b,c]	35	65	1.65	.48
Persisters	37	63	1.63	.48
D/t's	31	69	1.69	.46
Stopouts	38	62	1.62	.49
Parent of your sex[b,c]	57	42	1.42	.49
Persisters	55	45	1.45	.50
D/t's	61	39	1.39	.49
Stopouts	63	36	1.37	.48
Parent of the other sex	63	36	1.36	.48
Adults of your sex (not parent)	68	32	1.32	.47
Adults of the other sex (not parent)[b,c]	76	23	1.23	.42
Persisters	78	22	1.22	.41
D/t's	75	25	1.25	.43
Stopouts	64	34	1.35	.48

Note. Differences among the responses of the three retention groups were analyzed by analysis of variance techniques and chi-square analysis. Mean responses are calculated according to the following scale: 1 = no; 2 = yes.

[a]At least 99 percent of the sample responded to each item.

[b]Persisters, d/t's, and stopouts differed significantly ($p \leq .05$, analysis of variance).

[c]Persisters, d/t's, and stopouts differed significantly ($p \leq .05$, chi-square analysis).

Table 4.5 PEOPLE CONSULTED WHEN MAKING IMPORTANT DECISIONS[a]

PEOPLE	No	Yes	M	SD
Peers of your sex	21%	78%	1.79	.41
Parent of your sex	27	72	1.73	.45
Parent of the other sex	28	71	1.72	.45
Peers of the other sex[b,c]	39	61	1.61	.49
Persisters	*41*	*58*	*1.58*	*.49*
D/t's	*34*	*65*	*1.66*	*.47*
Stopouts	*41*	*58*	*1.59*	*.49*
Adults of your sex (not parent)	57	42	1.43	.50
Adults of the other sex (not parent)	64	35	1.35	.48

Note. Differences among the responses of the three retention groups were analyzed by analysis of variance techniques and chi-square analysis. Mean responses are calculated according to the following scale: 1 = no; 2 = yes.

[a]At least 99 percent of the sample responded to each item.

[b]Persisters, d/t's, and stopouts differed significantly ($p \leq .05$, analysis of variance).

[c]Persisters, d/t's, and stopouts differed significantly ($p \leq .05$, chi-square analysis).

Parent of the same sex. Fewer d/t's and stopouts, 39 and 36 percent, respectively, responded similarly. A third of the stopouts indicated that they felt free to discuss their most personal feelings with one or more Adult of the other sex (not parent), while only a fourth of the d/t's and 22 percent of the persisters expressed the same feelings.

ENJOYMENT OF ACTIVITIES

Respondents specified the degree to which they enjoyed (a) doing or viewing six activities and (b) doing 13 other activities (Table 4.6). Responses were indicated on a four-point scale ranging from *not at all* to *a great deal*. An option was also provided for the students to indicate that they had not tried the activity. The freshmen enjoyed interpersonal activities the most, and Dance and Poetry the least.

Persisters, d/t's, and stopouts differed in the degree to which they enjoyed doing or viewing various activities. Persisters enjoyed Sports, either observing or participating in, or both, to a greater degree than did d/t's and stopouts. Seventy-one percent of the persisters indicated that they enjoyed observing and/or participating in sports *a great deal*, while fewer stopouts (63 percent) and d/t's (62 percent) responded similarly.

Stopouts enjoyed cultural activities to a greater degree than did d/t's, while persisters enjoyed them least. Stopouts expressed the greatest amount of enjoyment from creating and/or appreciating Music, Art (painting, sculpture, crafts), and Poetry, while persisters reported the least. Three-quarters of the stopouts reported enjoying Music *a great deal*, while the corresponding percentages for d/t's and persisters were 66 and 62. A third of the stopouts enjoyed "viewing or doing" Art *a great deal* while only a quarter of the d/t's and persisters reported the same. Twenty-two percent of the stopouts stated that they enjoyed creating or appreciated Poetry *a great deal*; fewer of the other two groups (15 percent of the persisters and 14 percent of the d/t's) so responded.

Stopouts and d/t's enjoyed being by themselves more than did persisters. Thirty-seven percent of the stopouts and 36 percent of the d/t's indicated that they enjoyed being by themselves *a great deal*, while only twenty-nine percent of the persisters expressed the same sentiment.

Table 4.6

ENJOYMENT OF ACTIVITIES[a]

ACTIVITY	I Haven't Tried This	Not At All	Slightly	Moderately	A Great Deal	M	SD
Being with other people	1%	1%	2%	28%	69%	3.67	.53
Dating	4	1	4	26	64	3.61	.63
Meeting people	0	1	4	29	65	3.60	.61
Sports[b,c]	1	1	8	23	67	3.58	.68
Persisters	*1*	*1*	*7*	*21*	*71*	*3.62*	*.65*
D/t's	*1*	*1*	*8*	*28*	*62*	*3.51*	*.70*
Stopouts	*0*	*2*	*9*	*25*	*63*	*3.50*	*.75*
Music[c]	2	2	7	25	64	3.54	.71
Persisters	*2*	*2*	*8*	*26*	*62*	*3.52*	*.72*
D/t's	*2*	*2*	*7*	*24*	*66*	*3.57*	*.70*
Stopouts	*2*	*4*	*1*	*20*	*73*	*3.64*	*.73*
Outdoor activities (non-spectator - camping, hiking, mountain climbing, etc.)	4	2	8	26	61	3.52	.72
Attending parties	1	2	12	36	50	3.35	.77
Reading	0	2	11	37	49	3.34	.76
Working with things (sewing, carpentry, electronics, cooking, mechanics, etc.)	1	4	15	34	46	3.23	.86
Being by yourself[b,c]	1	4	17	47	32	3.07	.80
Persisters	*1*	*4*	*18*	*49*	*29*	*3.03*	*.79*
D/t's	*1*	*3*	*17*	*43*	*36*	*3.14*	*.80*
Stopouts	*1*	*4*	*19*	*38*	*37*	*3.10*	*.86*
"Bull sessions"	9	8	17	34	32	2.99	.94
Table games (bridge, chess, poker, etc.)	2	5	21	44	28	2.97	.84
Dancing (social)	4	10	18	36	32	2.94	.97
Drama	11	9	22	31	26	2.83	.96
Volunteer work	20	7	20	35	18	2.82	.88
Art (painting, sculpture, crafts)[b,c]	5	9	28	34	24	2.77	.94
Persisters	*5*	*11*	*28*	*33*	*23*	*2.71*	*.96*
D/t's	*5*	*6*	*28*	*35*	*26*	*2.84*	*.89*
Stopouts	*3*	*8*	*23*	*32*	*34*	*2.95*	*.96*
Giving parties	9	11	24	34	23	2.76	.96
Poetry[b,c]	4	18	34	29	15	2.43	.97
Persisters	*4*	*19*	*36*	*26*	*15*	*2.38*	*.97*
D/t's	*3*	*17*	*32*	*33*	*14*	*2.46*	*.95*
Stopouts	*3*	*12*	*29*	*33*	*22*	*2.68*	*.97*
Dance (ballet, tap, ethnic, etc.)	21	20	23	22	14	2.40	1.05

Note. Differences among the responses of the three retention groups were analyzed by analysis of variance techniques and chi-square analysis. Mean responses are calculated according to the following scale: 1 = not at all; 2 = slightly; 3 = moderately; 4 = a great deal.

[a] At least 99 percent of the sample responded to each item.

[b] Persisters, d/t's, and stopouts differed significantly ($p \leq .05$, analysis of variance).

[c] Persisters, d/t's, and stopouts differed significantly ($p \leq .05$, chi-square analysis).

SUMMARY

As entering freshmen, persisters, d/t's, and stopouts differed in their perceptions of various aspects of their interpersonal relationships. Persisters seemed to have had a more limited association with diverse groups than did d/t's and stopouts before they entered the University. They associated less frequently with people of a different race and of different socio-economic backgrounds, and understood less the values and behaviors of peers of the other sex. Persisters were, however, more likely than the other two groups to discuss their most personal feelings with their parent of the same sex.

Persisters enjoyed participating in and/or observing sports to a greater extent than did d/t's and stopouts, but described themselves as creating and/or appreciating art, music, and poetry to a lesser extent than did the other two groups. They also enjoyed being by themselves less than the others.

D/t's characterized themselves as interacting more with peers of the other sex outside of school or class. They more frequently associated with these peers, reported that they were more comfortable with them and understood their values and behaviors better than did the stopouts and persisters. Not surprisingly, they also felt freer to discuss their most personal feelings with peers of the other sex and were more likely to consult with these peers when they had an important decision to make. D/t's were also more likely to associate with small children.

Stopouts enjoyed creating and/or appreciating poetry, music, and art to a greater extent than did the others. They associated with people of a different race more than did the d/t's and persisters, but associated less with small children. They understood the values and behavior of people of a different religion to a greater extent than did the others, and were more likely than others to discuss their most personal feelings with one or more adults of the other sex (not a parent).

CHAPTER V

FAMILY

Families are an integral part of the individual emotional and behavioral structure. They strongly influence perceptions of self, others, and the world. Family expectations and support may be instrumental in decisions not only to go to college but also to stop out or drop out. The structure of the family and the extent of familial influence should be examined relative to college retention.

Freshmen provided extensive data about their families. In addition to providing demographic data, they described their family life and their relationships with their mothers, fathers, and siblings.

GENERAL INFORMATION

Inquiries were first made about the family in general: distance from SUNY/B to their parents' home, whether or not their biological mothers and fathers were living together, and range of family income.

Half of the respondents (51 percent) stated that their parents' home was 40 miles or less from SUNY/B; a third (35 percent) indicated the distance to be *10 miles or less*, while 16 percent said it was *11 to 40 miles* away. Seven percent indicated the University to be from *41 to 100 miles* from their parents' home. Homes of another third (32 percent) were *101 to 500 miles* from SUNY/B, while for a tenth, the distance was *more than 500 miles*. There were no significant differences among the responses for the three retention groups.

Freshmen were asked the range of their parents' total annual income before taxes. Persisters, d/t's, and stopouts did not differ in their responses. More than half indicated that their parents' annual income was less than $15,000. A third (31 percent) indicated the range to be *$10,000 - 14,999*, while 16 percent reported it to be *$5,000 - 9,999*. Four percent claimed that their parents' income was *under $5,000*. A fourth (23 percent) indicated that it was *$20,000 or over*.

Most of the freshmen (87 percent) indicated that their biological mothers and fathers were both alive and living with each other. The students were also

asked if there had been events in their family such as adoption, divorce, death, remarriage, serious illness, people other than their immediate family living with them, any family member's prolonged absence from home, etc. The responses of the freshmen who later became persisters, d/t's, and stopouts differed. About three-quarters (72 percent) of the persisters stated that there had been no such family events; 66 percent of the d/t's and 60 percent of the stopouts responded similarly.

Those students who had indicated that they had had a potentially disrupting family event were asked to specify the event and indicate their age at the time of its occurrence. Students in the three retention groups differed in only one of their responses. Ten percent of the stopouts reported that their parents were divorced; proportionately fewer persisters (3 percent) and d/t's (6 percent) reported the same.

COMMUNITY DESCRIPTION

Persisters perceived the community in which they grew up more positively than did the d/t's, while stopouts were the least positive in their perceptions. Fifty-eight percent of the persisters described their community as *friendly or close - involved with each other socially*, while half (51 percent) of the d/t's and fewer than half (45 percent) of the stopouts responded similarly. Interestingly, 18 percent of the stopouts described their community as *uninvolved - people don't know each other*, while about 12 percent of the persisters and 13 percent of the d/t's so responded.

FAMILY LIFE[1]

The students, as incoming freshmen, indicated how descriptive each of 11 adjectives was of their family life (Table 5.1). Responses were indicated on a three-point scale ranging from *not at all descriptive* to *very descriptive*. Per-

[1]For another report of SUNY/B students' family relationships, see Wyant, H., *Student Perceptions: Family, Friends and Others*. Buffalo, N.Y.: Publications Services, 1973.

Table 5.1 DESCRIPTION OF FAMILY LIFE[a]

DESCRIPTION	Not at All Descriptive	Somewhat Descriptive	Very Descriptive	M	SD
Loyal[b]	5%	35%	59%	2.54	.59
Persisters	*5*	*33*	*61*	*2.57*	*.59*
D/t's	*5*	*37*	*57*	*2.52*	*.59*
Stopouts	*10*	*40*	*49*	*2.40*	*.67*
Loving	6	41	53	2.47	.60
Sharing	6	44	50	2.44	.60
Fun[b,c]	10	53	36	2.26	.63
Persisters	*8*	*54*	*37*	*2.30*	*.61*
D/t's	*12*	*52*	*36*	*2.24*	*.65*
Stopouts	*16*	*56*	*27*	*2.11*	*.66*
Affectionate	10	54	35	2.25	.63
Active	14	50	35	2.22	.67
Quarrelsome	28	55	16	1.88	.66
Competitive	41	44	14	1.73	.70
Indifferent	64	30	5	1.41	.58
Hostile[b,c]	73	23	3	1.30	.52
Persisters	*76*	*22*	*3*	*1.27*	*.50*
D/t's	*72*	*24*	*4*	*1.32*	*.55*
Stopouts	*57*	*38*	*<1*	*1.46*	*.56*
Cold	79	18	3	1.23	.48

Note. Differences among the responses of the three retention groups were analyzed by analysis of variance techniques and chi-square analysis. Mean responses are calculated according to the following scale: 1 = not at all descriptive; 2 = somewhat descriptive; 3 = very descriptive.

[a]At least 99 percent of the sample responded to each item.

[b]Persisters, d/t's, and stopouts differed significantly ($p \leq .05$, analysis of variance).

[c]Persisters, d/t's, and stopouts differed significantly ($p \leq .05$, chi-square analysis).

sisters, d/t's, and stopouts differed in their description of only three of the 11 aspects of their family: Loyalty, Fun, and Hostility.

Sixty-one percent of the persisters and 57 percent of the d/t's indicated that their families were *very* Loyal; only half of the stopouts responded similarly. Ten percent of the stopouts indicated that their families were *not at all* Loyal; only five percent of the persisters and d/t's so responded. Thirty-seven percent of the persisters stated that Fun was *very* descriptive of their families; slightly fewer d/t's (35 percent) and only a quarter of the stopouts so reported that perception. Three-fourths of the persisters described their families as *not at all* Hostile. Slightly fewer d/t's (72 percent) so responded, while only 57 percent of the stopouts responded similarly.

RELATIONSHIP WITH MOTHER

Incoming freshmen were asked a series of questions about their mothers. The respondents were told to broadly interpret the term "mother" to mean a woman with whom they had some kind of child/parent relationship - whether or not she was their biological mother. If no such relationship existed, the respondents were instructed to skip to the next section of the survey. Responses were indicated on a four-point scale: *No, this is not a part of our relationship; yes, on my part; yes, on her part;* and *yes, on the part of both of us.*[2] Students' responses indicated that their relationships with their mothers were most frequently described by mutual Love and Interest in the welfare of the other (Table 5.2). Persisters, d/t's, and stopouts did not differ in their responses.

Nearly two-thirds (64 percent) of the freshmen indicated that their mothers were or had been employed sometime while they were growing up. A third (35 percent) of these students (22 percent of the sample) stated that the overall effect, other than financial, of their mothers' working was *positive;* 57 percent (36 percent of the sample) said there was *none that they were aware of,* and a few, 9 percent (5 percent of the sample) indicated that the effect was *negative.* Persisters, d/t's, and stopouts did not differ in their responses.

Students also indicated how important it was to their mothers that they go to college. Nearly half (45 percent) specified that it was *very important;* it was

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[2]The second and third options were collapsed to yield a continuous variable suitable for analysis of variance techniques.

Table 5.2 CHARACTERISTICS OF THE STUDENT-MOTHER RELATIONSHIP[a]

CHARACTERISTIC	No, this is not part of our relationship	Yes, on my part or on her part, not both	Yes, on the part of both of us	M	SD
Love	3%	3%	92%	2.91	.38
Interested in the welfare of the other	3	5	90	2.89	.40
Loyalty	5	6	87	2.83	.50
Respect	5	9	85	2.81	.50
Humor, fun	7	5	86	2.80	.56
Understanding of the other's feelings and behavior	12	14	73	2.61	.70
Acceptance of the other's weaknesses	13	15	71	2.59	.71
Acceptance of the other's values and beliefs	13	16	68	2.56	.72
Help in working out problems	16	16	66	2.51	.76
Expression of affection	16	17	65	2.50	.76
Sharing of interests	28	7	63	2.35	.90
Physical help	32	12	53	2.21	.91
Financial help	19	47	33	2.14	.71

Note. Differences among the respondents of the three retention groups were analyzed by analysis of variance techniques and chi-square analysis. Mean responses are calculated according to the following scale: 1 = no, this is not part of our relationship; 2 = yes, on my part or on her part; 3 = yes, on the part of both of us.

[a]These items were answered by only those 1637 students (98 percent of the sample) who indicated that they have/had a "mother." At least 97 percent of the sample responded to each item.

quite important to an additional third (32 percent). It was *somewhat important* to 16 percent, while only five percent indicated that it was *not important* to their mothers that they attend college. Again, persisters, d/t's, and stopouts did not differ in their responses.

RELATIONSHIP WITH FATHER

The incoming students were also asked the same series of questions about their fathers as had been asked about their mothers. The same options were provided. The students were told to broadly interpret the term "father" to mean a man with whom they had some kind of child/parent relationship - whether or not he was their biological father. Again, if such a relationship did not exist, the respondents were instructed to proceed to the next section of the survey.

Persisters had closer relationships with their fathers than did the stopouts, with the exception of receiving and rendering Physical help (Table 5.3). D/t's responded more positively than did the stopouts (excepting the item regarding Physical help) and frequently as positively as the persisters.

Interest in the welfare of the other on the part of both the fathers and the students characterized the relationships of 89 percent of the persisters and 85 percent of the d/t's. Fewer stopouts, 79 percent, responded similarly, while an additional 12 percent indicated an Interest in the Welfare of the other on either their or their fathers' parts, but not both.

Persisters reported that their relationships with their fathers were characterized by Loyalty and Sharing of interests to a greater extent than did the d/t's and stopouts. Eighty-six percent of the persisters reported Loyalty on both their part and the part of their fathers; fewer d/t's (82 percent) and stopouts (77 percent) did so. Interestingly, 11 percent of the stopouts indicated that Loyalty was not part of their relationships, while 9 and 6 percent of the d/t's and persisters, respectively, responded likewise.

Seventy-one percent of the persisters said that Sharing of interests was mutual. That type of relationship was reported by 66 percent of the d/t's and 57 percent of the stopouts. Nearly twice as many stopouts (11 percent) as persisters (5 percent) and d/t's (7 percent) indicated that there was a Sharing of interests on their part or their fathers', but not both.

Acceptance of the other's values and beliefs and Understanding of the other's

Table 5.3 CHARACTERISTICS OF THE STUDENT-FATHER RELATIONSHIP[a]

CHARACTERISTICS	No, this is not part of our relationship	Yes, on my part or on her part, not both	Yes, on the part of both of us	M	SD
Interest in the welfare of the other[b]	6%	4%	87%	2.84	.51
Persisters	5	3	89	2.86	.48
D/t's	7	5	85	2.81	.54
Stopouts	3	12	79	2.80	.48
Love	7	4	85	2.81	.55
Loyalty[c]	7	4	85	2.80	.56
Persisters	6	4	86	2.83	.52
D/t's	9	5	82	2.77	.60
Stopouts	11	5	77	2.71	.67
Respect	6	11	80	2.77	.54
Humor, fun	12	5	80	2.71	.67
Acceptance of the others' weaknesses	15	14	67	2.54	.75
Acceptance of the other's values and beliefs[c]	16	17	63	2.48	.77
Persisters	15	17	65	2.51	.75
D/t's	17	16	63	2.48	.76
Stopouts	22	23	49	2.29	.82
Understanding of the other's feelings and behavior[c]	18	14	69	2.48	.79
Persisters	18	15	65	2.49	.78
D/t's	18	12	66	2.51	.78
Stopouts	25	19	51	2.27	.86
Sharing of interests[b]	23	6	68	2.47	.85
Persisters	22	5	71	2.51	.83
D/t's	24	7	66	2.44	.86
Stopouts	26	11	57	2.33	.89
Help in working out problems	23	17	57	2.35	.85
Physical help[b]	32	10	54	2.23	.92
Persisters	32	10	54	2.24	.91
D/t's	33	9	54	2.22	.93
Stopouts	24	19	59	2.28	.85
Expression of affection	33	8	55	2.22	.92
Financial help	8	60	28	2.21	.58

Note. Differences among the respondents of the three retention groups were analyzed by analysis of variance techniques and chi-square analysis. Mean responses are calculated according to the following scale: 1 = no, this is not part of our relationship; 2 = yes, on my part or on his part; 3 = yes, on the part of both of us.

[a]These items were answered by only those 1610 students (97 percent of the sample) who indicated that they have/had a "father." At least 96 percent of the sample responded to each item.

[b]Persisters, d/t's, and stopouts differed significantly ($p \leq .05$, chi-square analysis).

[c]Persisters, d/t's, and stopouts differed significantly ($p \leq .05$, analysis of variance).

feelings and behavior were more characteristic of both persisters' and d/t's relationships with their fathers than of the stopouts'. Two-thirds of the persisters and 63 percent of the d/t's reported Acceptance of the other's values and beliefs on both their part and their fathers'; only half of the stopouts responded similarly. Two-thirds of the d/t's and persisters indicated that Understanding of the other's feelings and behavior characterized both their fathers and themselves. Half of the stopouts responded in the same manner.

Slightly more stopouts (59 percent) than persisters (54 percent) and d/t's (54 percent) indicated that Physical help was provided by both their fathers and themselves. Proportionately more stopouts (19 percent) than persisters (10 percent) and d/t's (9 percent) indicated that Physical help on their part of their fathers', but not both, characterized their relationships with their fathers.

The freshmen's responses indicated that it was slightly more important to their fathers than to their mothers that they go to college. Half stated that it was *very important*; 8 percent said it was *quite important*. It was *somewhat important* to 16 percent, while only six percent indicated that it was *not important*. Persisters, d/t's, and stopouts did not differ in their responses as incoming freshmen.

SIBLINGS

The 1,595 freshmen who indicated that they had siblings were asked how many younger and older siblings of each sex they had, including half-sisters and half-brothers. The freshmen in the sample came from moderate-size families. The average number of children, including half-sisters and half-brothers, was about three; the average was about a half for each category - younger brothers, younger sisters, older brothers, and older sisters. Forty-one percent of the freshmen were the first of their siblings to attend college. Persisters, d/t's, and stopouts did not differ in their responses.

Using a five-point scale ranging from *terrible* to *great*, persisters and d/t's reported somewhat better relationships with their siblings than did stopouts (Table 5.4). Twenty-nine percent of the d/t's and a quarter of the persisters described their relationships as *great*. Fewer stopouts, 21 percent, so responded. Interestingly, four percent of the stopouts described their relationships as *terrible*, while fewer than 1 percent of the persisters and d/t's so responded.

Table 5.4 DESCRIPTION OF RELATIONSHIPS WITH SIBLINGS[a]

CHARACTERISTIC	Persisters	D/t's	Stopouts
Great	26%	29%	21%
Good	54	49	49
Good or great with one or more of them, not with others	12	12	15
Not very good	4	6	3
Terrible	<1	<1	4

[a]This item was answered by only those 1,595 students who indicated that they had siblings. Persisters, d/t's, and stopouts differed significantly ($p \leq .05$, chi-square analysis).

SUMMARY

Persisters perceived the community in which they grew up in more positive terms than did the d/t's, while stopouts were the least positive. Persisters were also the most positive in the description of their family, describing them as being more loyal and fun, and less hostile. Stopouts depicted their family as being more hostile and less loyal and fun.

Interestingly, persisters had had fewer potentially disruptive events in their family, such as death, remarriage, prolonged absence of a family member, or serious illness than did the others. Proportionately fewer persisters than d/t's also reported that their parents were divorced; stopouts reported the highest percentage.

Persisters, d/t's, and stopouts did not differ in their descriptions of their relationships with thei mothers. They described their relationships with their mothers more positively than their relationships with their fathers for 10 of the 13 aspects of relationships listed. In characterizing their relationships with their fathers, persisters generally reported closer relationships than did the stopouts; d/t's generally responded more positively than did the stopouts and frequently as positively as the persisters.

Persisters and d/t's also reported slightly better relationships with their siblings than did the stopouts.

CHAPTER VI

SELF-DESCRIPTION

Self-assessment of attributes, abilities, and goals, however realistic, are central in the decision-making process. To investigate the manner in which self-assessed personal characteristics and attributes relate to the decision to persist, stopout, dropout or transfer, students were asked to describe themselves relative to various characteristics, to rate their abilities, and to rate the contribution of various experiences to their sense of self-satisfaction. Freshmen were also asked to state the importance of various goals in their lives and to indicate their beliefs relative to God or some other "Life Force."[1]

PERSONAL CHARACTERISTICS

The freshmen indicated how descriptive of them each of 30 characteristics was (Table 6.1). Responses were indicated on the following three-point scale: *not at all descriptive*, *somewhat descriptive*, and *very descriptive*.

Persisters, d/t's, and stopouts differed in only eight of the 30 self-descriptions. Persisters characterized themselves as the most Dependable, Self-disciplined, and Competitive of the three groups and the least Creative and the least Independent in thought. The responses of d/t's indicated that they were the most Insightful, Independent in action and Moody. Stopouts described themselves as being the most Creative and the most Independent in thought, while their responses indicated that they were the least Dependable, Self-disciplined, and Competitive.

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[1] For an extensive report of the self-assessment of various abilities and attributes of the 1975 freshmen at SUNY/B, along with the importance of possessing each and the expected contribution of college to each, see Coles, H. William, III., *College Student Perceptions, 1975 Freshmen: Expectations of the Influences of University Experience on Personal, Social, and Intellectual Characteristics*, Buffalo, N.Y.: Publications Services, 1977.

Table 6.1 SELF-RATINGS OF PERSONAL CHARACTERISTICS[a]

CHARACTERISTIC	Not at All Descriptive	Somewhat Descriptive	Very Descriptive	M	SD
Open to new ideas	1%	29%	70%	2.69	.48
Honest	2	29	69	2.68	.50
Responsible	1	33	66	2.65	.50
Open to new experiences	1	33	65	2.64	.50
Dependable[b,c]	2	33	63	2.63	.52
Persisters	1	32	66	2.65	.50
D/t's	2	36	61	2.60	.53
Stopouts	5	36	58	2.51	.60
Open to establishing relationships with new people	2	33	64	2.62	.53
Sense of humor	1	38	60	2.60	.51
Intellectually curious	2	39	59	2.58	.52
Good-natured	2	38	59	2.57	.54
Considerate of others	1	42	56	2.56	.52
Enthusiastic	3	44	51	2.48	.57
Independent in thought[b,c]	2	50	47	2.45	.54
Persisters	3	52	45	2.42	.55
D/t's	2	49	49	2.48	.53
Stopouts	3	39	57	2.54	.56
Playful	4	49	46	2.43	.57
Self-disciplined[b,c]	6	48	45	2.39	.60
Persisters	5	48	47	2.42	.59
D/t's	7	48	44	2.38	.61
Stopouts	12	52	34	2.22	.68
Self-confident (intellectually)	5	50	43	2.38	.59
Aware of social issues	5	54	42	2.37	.57
Planful	7	51	41	2.34	.61
Insightful[c]	5	57	38	2.33	.57
Persisters	6	59	35	2.30	.57
D/t's	4	53	42	2.38	.56
Stopouts	4	60	35	2.31	.55
Competitive[b,c]	11	47	42	2.31	.66
Persisters	9	46	45	2.35	.65
D/t's	12	50	38	2.26	.66
Stopouts	19	41	40	2.22	.73
Independent in action[b,c]	4	62	33	2.29	.55
Persisters	5	64	31	2.27	.53
D/t's	4	58	37	2.34	.53
Stopouts	8	58	33	2.26	.59
Aware of political issues	11	55	33	2.23	.63
Creative[b]	11	58	31	2.21	.61
Persisters	11	60	28	2.18	.60
D/t's	11	53	36	2.24	.62
Stopouts	5	63	32	2.27	.56
Moody[b,c]	14	51	34	2.20	.67
Persisters	15	54	31	2.16	.66
D/t's	14	45	40	2.27	.69
Stopouts	10	62	27	2.18	.59
Self-confident (socially)	14	62	23	2.09	.61
Critical of others	18	63	18	2.00	.60
Procrastinating	22	55	21	1.99	.67
Nervous	27	53	20	1.93	.68
Lazy	36	50	13	1.76	.66
Irritable	40	50	9	1.69	.63
Pessimistic	45	44	11	1.66	.67

Note. Differences among the responses for the three retention groups were analyzed by analysis of variance techniques and chi-square analysis. Mean responses are calculated according to the following scale: 1 = not at all descriptive; 2 = somewhat descriptive; 3 = very descriptive.

[a]At least 98 percent of the sample responded to each item.

[b]Persisters, d/t's, and stopouts differed significantly ($p \leq .05$, chi-square analysis).

[c]Persisters, d/t's, and stopouts differed significantly ($p \leq .05$, analysis of variance).

Two-thirds of the persisters described themselves as being *very* Dependable, while fewer of the d/t's (61 percent) and stopouts (55 percent) described themselves as such. Nearly half of the persisters (47 percent) and slightly fewer d/t's (44 percent) described themselves as *very* Self-disciplined, while fewer stopouts (34 percent) did so. Nearly twice as many stopouts (12 percent) as persisters (5 percent) and d/t's (7 percent) described themselves as *not at all* Self-disciplined. Fewer than half of the persisters (45 percent) reported that they were *very* Competitive; 40 percent of the stopouts and 38 percent of the d/t's did so. Again, a larger proportion of stopouts (18 percent) than persisters (9 percent) or d/t's (12 percent) described themselves as *not at all* Competitive.

D/t's depicted themselves as being more Insightful, Independent in action, and Moody than did stopouts and persisters. Proportionately more of the d/t's (42 percent) than persisters and stopouts (35 percent each) described themselves as *very* Insightful. Thirty-seven percent of the d/t's described themselves as *very* Independent in action and a similar portion (40 percent) depicted themselves as being *very* Moody. Fewer persisters, 31 percent, indicated that they were *very* Independent in action; the same percentage also described themselves as *very* Moody. The corresponding percentages for stopouts were 33 and 27, respectively.

A majority of stopouts (57 percent) described themselves as being *very* Independent in thought. Half of the d/t's and slightly fewer persisters (45 percent) responded similarly. Stopouts also described themselves as being more Creative than did d/t's and persisters. A third of the stopouts and d/t's and 28 percent of the persisters reported that they were *very* Creative. Sixty-two percent of the stopouts, 53 percent of the d/t's, and 60 percent of the persisters said that they were *somewhat* Creative.

RATINGS OF ABILITIES

The entering students also rated their abilities in each of 22 areas using a five-point scale: *not good at all*, *not very good*, *fair*, *good*, and *very good*. The freshmen rated their ability to Cope with a period of good luck or happiness the highest (Table 6.2). It was rated, on the average, *good* to *very good*. The remaining 21 abilities were rated, on the average, *fair* to *good*. The three retention groups differed in their ratings of only five of the 22 abilities.

Table 6.2 SELF-RATINGS OF ABILITIES[a]

ABILITY	Not Good at All	Not Very Good	Fair	Good	Very Good	M	SD
Cope with period of good luck or happiness	<1%	1%	13%	50%	35%	4.19	.73
Cope with success	<1	3	23	55	19	3.90	.74
Apply knowledge and concepts to new situations	<1	2	28	52	17	3.83	.73
Cope with finances[b,c]	1	5	29	47	18	3.75	.84
Persisters	*1*	*4*	*28*	*48*	*19*	*3.80*	*.82*
D/t's	*1*	*5*	*30*	*47*	*16*	*3.71*	*.84*
Stopouts	*4*	*8*	*36*	*33*	*18*	*3.52*	*1.02*
Cope with competition	2	6	26	48	18	3.75	.88
See a problem in a broad context	<1	4	31	49	15	3.74	.77
Critically analyze information	<1	5	35	45	14	3.68	.80
Integrate information into a meaningful concept	<1	5	36	45	13	3.66	.77
Express ideas in writing	2	9	30	39	19	3.66	.95
Make decisions[b]	1	7	30	48	12	3.64	.83
Persisters	*1*	*6*	*33*	*48*	*11*	*3.63*	*.80*
D/t's	*1*	*9*	*27*	*50*	*13*	*3.66*	*.85*
Stopouts	*4*	*11*	*24*	*43*	*18*	*3.58*	*1.04*
Cope with peer pressure	1	8	31	45	14	3.63	.87
Cope with sexual desire[b]	2	7	33	45	13	3.61	.86
Persisters	*1*	*7*	*33*	*46*	*12*	*3.63*	*.82*
D/t's	*3*	*7*	*32*	*43*	*15*	*3.61*	*.92*
Stopouts	*2*	*4*	*42*	*36*	*11*	*3.52*	*.85*
Cope with illness	2	10	31	41	15	3.57	.94
Cope with conflicts[b]	1	5	40	45	9	3.56	.76
Persisters	*<1*	*6*	*40*	*46*	*8*	*3.55*	*.74*
D/t's	*1*	*4*	*40*	*46*	*10*	*3.60*	*.75*
Stopouts	*3*	*11*	*37*	*36*	*12*	*3.43*	*.96*
Recognize and be comfortable with complexity	1	9	41	39	10	3.47	.8[illegible]
Cope with disappointment	2	10	37	40	10	3.47	.83
Cope with time pressure	3	11	35	39	12	3.45	.94
Express ideas orally	4	11	34	38	12	3.44	.99
Cope with fear	2	11	39	40	8	3.41	.86
Cope with loneliness[b]	4	17	32	34	12	3.35	1.02
Persisters	*3*	*17*	*35*	*34*	*11*	*3.33*	*.99*
D/t's	*4*	*18*	*28*	*36*	*14*	*3.37*	*1.06*
Stopouts	*7*	*9*	*32*	*32*	*20*	*3.50*	*1.11*
Cope with anger	4	14	36	35	10	3.34	.98
Cope with failure	5	15	41	33	6	3.21	.93

Note. Differences among the responses for the three retention groups were analyzed by analysis of variance techniques and chi-square analysis. Mean responses are calculated according to the following scale: 1 = not good at all; 2 = not very good; 3 = fair; 4 = good; 5 = very good.

[a]At least 99 percent of the sample responded to each item.

[b]Persisters, d/t's, and stopouts differed significantly ($p \leq .05$, chi-square analysis).

[c]Persisters, d/t's, and stopouts differed significantly ($p \leq .05$, analysis of variance).

Persisters and d/t's rated their abilities to Make decisions and to cope with Finances, Sexual desire, and Conflicts higher than did the stopouts. Stopouts rated their ability to cope with Loneliness higher than did persisters and d/t's.

Nineteen percent of the persisters and 16 percent of the d/t's rated their ability to cope with Finances as *very good*, while about half, 48 and 47 percent, respectively, rated that ability as *good*. For stopouts the corresponding percentages were 18 and 33. Thirteen percent of the d/t's and 11 percent of the persisters rated their ability to Make decisions as *very good*, while half of each group rated their ability as *good*. Eighteen percent of the stopouts rated their ability to Make decisions as *very good*, but only 43 percent rated it as *good*. Fifteen percent of the stopouts, however, rated their ability to Make decisions as *not very good* or *not good at all*. The corresponding percentages for persisters and d/t's were 7 and 10.

Fifty-eight percent of the d/t's and persisters rated their ability to cope with Sexual desire as *very good* or *good*, while fewer than half of the stopouts (47 percent) responded similarly. About a tenth of each group (stopouts, 12 percent; d/t's, 10 percent; persisters, 8 percent) rated their ability to cope with Conflicts as *very good*. Nearly half of the d/t's and persisters (46 percent each) rated their ability as *good* while only slightly over a third (36 percent) of the stopouts did so.

Stopouts rated their ability to cope with Loneliness higher than did the others. Twenty percent of the stopouts reported their ability to be *very good* while only 11 percent of the persisters and slightly more of the d/t's, 14 percent, did so.

CONTRIBUTIONS TO A SENSE OF SELF-SATISFACTION

The respondents indicated the extent to which 12 competences and relationships contributed to their sense of satisfaction with themselves (Table 6.3). Responses were on a four-point scale: *not at all*, *a little*, *moderately*, and *a great deal*. Persisters, d/t's, and stopouts differed in their responses to five items. Persisters reported that Relationships with members of their family, their Athletic competence, and their Material possessions contributed more to their sense of satisfaction than d/t's and stopouts said it contributed to theirs,

while Artistic competence contributed less than was indicated by the others. D/t's reported that Relationships with peers of the same sex and Athletic competence contributed less to their sense of self-satisfaction than was indicated by the stopouts and persisters. Responses indicated that the contribution of Artistic competence to the sense of self-satisfaction of stopouts was greater than it was to persisters and d/t's, while Material possessions contributed less to stopouts than to persisters and d/t's.

Nearly half of the persisters (47 percent) reported that their Relationships with members of their family contributed *a great deal* to their sense of satisfaction with themselves. Only 12 percent said they contributed *a little* or *not at all*. Forty-one percent of the d/t's and stopouts indicated that Relationships with members of their family contributed *a great deal* to their sense of self-satisfaction, while 19 and 22 percent, respectively, indicated that they contributed *a little* or *not at all*. This is consistent with the students' descriptions of their family; persisters were the most positive in their description (Chapter V).

Persisters indicated that Athletic competence contributed slightly more than was indicated by the others. A third of the persisters reported that Athletic competence contributed *a great deal* while only 29 percent of each of the others reported the same. Seventy percent of the persisters reported that their Material possessions contributed *moderately* or *a great deal* to the sense of self-satisfaction. Two-thirds of the d/t's and 57 percent of stopouts reported the same.

Stopouts and persisters said that Relationships with peers of the same sex contributed more to their sense of self-satisfaction than was indicated by the d/t's. Fifty-nine percent of the stopouts and nearly as many persisters (56 percent) said that these relationships contributed *a great deal*. Only five percent of the stopouts and persisters said these relationships contributed *a little* or *not at all*. Half of the d/t's reported that relationships with peers of the same sex contributed *a great deal* while 10 percent declared that the relationships contributed *a little* or *not at all*.

A quarter of the stopouts reported that Artistic competence contributed *a great deal* to their sense of satisfaction. The corresponding percentages for d/t's and persisters were 18 and 15. A quarter of the persisters and 21 percent of the d/t's stated that Artistic competence contributed *not at all* to their sense of self-satisfaction while only 14 percent of the stopouts responded similarly.

Table 6.3 CONTRIBUTIONS TO A SENSE OF SELF-SATISFACTION[a]

CONTRIBUTIONS	Not at All	A Little	Moderately	A Great Deal	M	SD
Your mind	1%	4%	32%	63%	3.58	.60
Intellectual competence	1	5	36	58	3.52	.62
Relationships with peers of the same sex[b,c]	1	6	38	54	3.47	.66
Persisters	1	4	38	56	3.50	.62
D/t's	1	9	37	53	3.40	.71
Stopouts	1	4	35	59	3.53	.64
Relationships with peers of the other sex	3	11	33	53	3.37	.79
Relationships with members of your family[b,c]	3	13	40	44	3.26	.78
Persisters	2	10	40	47	3.32	.73
D/t's	3	16	39	41	3.19	.82
Stopouts	2	20	37	41	3.16	.82
Earning your own money	5	11	38	46	3.26	.83
Social competence	3	11	46	39	3.22	.77
Your body	4	12	44	40	3.20	.80
Athletic competence[c]	12	20	35	32	2.87	1.00
Persisters	11	16	36	34	2.96	.99
D/t's	14	23	34	29	2.77	1.02
Stopouts	13	20	35	29	2.82	1.00
Relationships with teachers	7	22	48	22	2.86	.84
Your material possessions[b,c]	8	24	47	21	2.80	.86
Persisters	6	23	49	21	2.86	.83
D/t's	10	25	45	20	2.76	.89
Stopouts	14	26	41	16	2.61	.94
Artistic competence[c]	23	30	29	17	2.40	1.02
Persisters	25	31	29	15	2.35	1.02
D/t's	21	30	30	18	2.45	1.02
Stopouts	14	30	31	23	2.64	1.00

Note. Differences among the responses for the three retention groups were analyzed by analysis of variance techniques and chi-square analysis. Mean responses are calculated according to the following scale: 1 = not at all; 2 = a little; 3 = moderately; 4 = a great deal.

[a] At least 98 percent of the sample responded to each item.

[b] Persisters, d/t's, and stopouts differed significantly ($p \leq .05$, chi-square analysis).

[c] Persisters, d/t's, and stopouts differed significantly ($p \leq .05$, analysis of variance).

LIFE GOALS

Entering freshmen indicated the importance to them of each of 12 goals of personal, social, intellectual, and professional Development (Table 6.4). Responses were indicated on a four-point scale ranging from *not important* to *very important*. Persisters, d/t's, and stopouts differed in the importance that they attributed to only one of these goals - Openness to ideas, experiences, and interests. This goal was only slightly more important to persisters and d/t's than to stopouts. Ninety-three percent of the persisters and 91 percent of the d/t's said Openness to ideas, experiences, and interests were *quite* or *very important* to them, while slightly fewer stopouts (87 percent) responded similarly.

BELIEF IN GOD OR OTHER "LIFE FORCE"

Students indicated which of three statements best described their belief about the existence of God or some other "Life Force." Nearly two-thirds of the respondents (62 percent) reported that they were *sure there is such an existence*. Thirty percent said they were *not sure*, while six percent indicated that they were *sure there is no such existence*. Persisters, d/t's, and stopouts did not differ in their responses as freshmen.

Those respondents who reported that they were sure of such an existence or were doubtful (these two groups constitute 92 percent of the respondents) were asked to indicate how important a part of their life their belief in (and/or relationship with) God or some other "Life Force" was. Their belief was *very important* to 21 percent of the sample, *quite important* to 20 percent, *somewhat important* to 23 percent, and *not very important* to 20 percent. Eight percent indicated that they were *not sure*. Persisters, d/t's, and stopouts did not differ in their responses.

Table 6.4 IMPORTANCE OF VARIOUS LIFE GOALS[a]

GOALS	Not Important	Somewhat Important	Quite Important	Very Important	M	SD
Understanding yourself, your strengths and weaknesses	<1%	2%	15%	81%	3.80	.47
Independence in thought and action	<1	4	29	65	3.61	.60
Wisdom and success in parenthood and/or marriage	3	7	20	67	3.55	.76
Understanding of other people: skill and enjoyment in interpersonal relationships	<1	7	28	62	3.55	.66
Openness to ideas, experiences, and interests[b]	<1	6	32	60	3.53	.64
Persisters	*<1*	*5*	*35*	*58*	*3.53*	*.61*
D/t's	*1*	*8*	*29*	*62*	*3.53*	*.67*
Stopouts	*0*	*11*	*27*	*60*	*3.50*	*.69*
Definition of a realistic and satisfactory philosophy of life	3	9	24	59	3.47	.79
Financial independence	2	13	30	54	3.39	.77
Competence and knowledge in vocational/professional area	2	14	29	54	3.37	.80
Critical thinking and skill in problem-solving	2	16	40	41	3.22	.77
Awareness of and knowledge about social issues	2	19	42	35	3.11	.80
Mature *inter*dependence with parental family	6	18	37	38	3.09	.89
Broad knowledge of humanities, social sciences, and natural sciences	5	30	35	29	2.89	.88

Note. Differences among the responses of the three retention groups were analyzed by analysis of variance techniques and chi-square analysis. Mean responses are calculated according to the following scale: 1 = not important; 2 = somewhat important; 3 = quite important; 4 = very important.

[a]At least 98 percent of the sample responded to each item except "Definition of a realistic and satisfactory philosophy of life" to which 95 percent responded (see page 4).

[b]Persisters, d/t's, and stopouts differed significantly ($p \leq .05$, chi-square analysis).

SUMMARY

Incoming freshmen who later became persisters, d/t's, and stopouts described themselves differently on various personal characteristics. Persisters described themselves as being more dependable, self-disciplined, and competitive than either of the other groups. They also depicted themselves as being the least independent in thought and the least creative. D/t's indicated that they were the most insightful, independent in action, and moody. Stopouts characterized themselves as the most independent in thought and the most creative, while being least dependable, self-disciplined, and competitive.

Freshmen also rated their abilities in various areas. Both persisters and d/t's rated their abilities to make decisions and to cope with finances, sexual desire, and conflicts higher than did the stopouts. Stopouts rated their ability to cope with loneliness higher than did persisters and d/t's.

Persisters reported that relationships with members of their family, athletic competence, and their material possessions contributed more to their sense of satisfaction than d/t's and stopouts said it contributed to theirs, while artistic competence contributed less than was indicated by the others. D/t's reported that relationships with peers of the same sex and athletic competence contributed less to their sense of self-satisfaction than was indicated by the persisters and stopouts. Stopouts indicated that the contribution of artistic competence to their sense of satisfaction was more and the contribution of their material possessions less than was indicated by the others.

In response to questions regarding the importance of life goals, openness to ideas, experiences, and interests was slightly more important to persisters and d/t's than to stopouts.

CHAPTER VII

SUMMARY

A four year follow-up of the freshman class of 1973 was conducted to determine the relationships between extensive information provided by the incoming freshmen and their retention status after four years. Nearly all of the students (85 percent, 1,666 of 1,949 students) who first entered the University as full-time, regular admissions freshmen in the fall of 1973 completed the *College Student Perceptions Survey* the summer before entering the University. The Survey contains 305 multiple-choice items and 47 free-response questions.

Four years later, in July of 1977, 976 students, 59 percent of the sample, were persisters; they had attended continuously, enrolling for three or more credit hours each of the eight semesters. Five hundred and ninety-nine students, 36 percent, had left the University, either dropping out or transferring to another institution; they are referred to collectively as d/t's. The remaining 91 students, five percent, were stopouts. They had stopped taking courses (or had taken two credit hours or less) for at least a semester, then returned to the University on a more full-time basis and were currently enrolled.

Persisters, dropouts/transfers (d/t's), and stopouts were more similar than dissimilar. Their responses differed significantly for only 67 of the 305 survey items (22 percent) and 2 of the 47 free-response items (4 percent). They did not differ substantially on the four items considered from admission data: high school class size, average, and class standing and New York Regents Scholarship Examination Scores. The pattern of differences in the responses of the three groups do, however, suggest interesting profiles for each group.

PERSISTERS

Persisters generally had the most positive impressions of their community and their family life. They perceived the community in which they grew up as more friendly and close than did the others and were more apt to describe their families as loyal and fun and less likely to indicate that they were hostile.

Persisters had fewer potentially stressful events in their family, such as death, remarriage, prolonged absence of a member, or serious illness than did the others. Also proportionately fewer persisters than d/t's or stopouts reported that their parents were divorced.

Self-ratings indicated that the incoming freshmen who persisted at SUNY/B for four years were less creative and less independent in thought, and they created and/or appreciated art, music, and poetry to a lesser extent than did the other two groups. They did, however, enjoy participating in and/or observing sports to a greater extent than did d/t's and stopouts.

Persisters indicated that relationships with members of their family, athletic competence, and their material possessions contributed more to their sense of self-satisfaction than was reported by the others, while artistic competence contributed less than was indicated by the others. Regarding career characteristics, it was more desirable to persisters to have friendly associates, opportunity for social interaction, prestige, and large incomes while it was less desirable to have the opportunity to be creative. Persisters associated less frequently than did the others with people of different races and of different socioeconomic backgrounds, and did not understand the values and behaviors of peers of the other sex as well. They were more likely than the other two groups to discuss their most personal feelings with their parent of the same sex.

Persisters were more satisfied with their high school academic efforts and experiences and were more enthusiastic about college. Self-ratings indicated that they were more competitive and self-disciplined - skills frequently associated with degree completion - and were possibly less distracted by close associations with peers of the other sex and other groups.

As entering freshmen, proportionately more persisters than d/t's and stopouts planned to complete a baccalaureate at SUNY/B. This is very useful information. By identifying as entering freshmen those who said that they were not sure of completing their baccalaureate at this University, 42 percent of the d/t's and 51 percent of the stopouts could have been reached before they dropped out or transferred, or stopped out. Identification of these entering students could be accomplished by a survey, or by contact with faculty or academic advisors. Reasons for not planning to obtain a baccalaureate at the University could then be determined and programs and procedures designed to decrease stopping out, and increase the retention of potential dropouts and transfers in cases where stopping out, dropping out or transferring might not be most advantageous to the students.

DROPOUTS/TRANSFERS

The d/t's are assumed to be two different groups of students, both of whom had left the University within the four years after entering as freshmen. Although there are no data available to substantiate the assumption, it seems plausible that one group transferred to another educational institution while the other dropped out and did not continue their formal education. D/t's described themselves in characteristics and associations that make their departure, whatever the destination, more understandable. They depicted themselves as more insightful and independent in action than did other groups. They also characterized themselves as interacting more often with peers of the other sex outside of school or class.

Comparison of the responses of the three groups as entering freshmen indicated that d/t's more frequently associated with peers of the other sex, understood the values and behaviors of these peers better, and were more comfortable in associating with these peers. Proportionately more d/t's than persisters and stopouts indicated that they felt free to discuss their most personal feelings with peers of the other sex and consulted with these peers when they had an important decision to make. Interestingly, both relationships with peers of the same sex and athletic competence were indicated by the d/t's to contribute less to their sense of self-satisfaction than was indicated by others.

It is quite possible that individuals with such close associations with peers of the other sex might want to transfer to another institution to be closer to a particular individual. Also these students might be more likely to leave school to be married and to start raising and supporting a family.

STOPOUTS

Stopouts are an interesting group. They were the least satisfied with their high school academic experiences and efforts and the least enthusiastic about attending college. Their self-descriptions indicated that they rated themselves lower than did persisters and d/t's on several skills generally associated with academic success: dependability, self-discipline, and competitiveness. They also rated themselves lower on their ability to make decisions and their abilities to cope with finances, sexual desire and conflicts.

Stopouts generally described their community and their family life in less positive terms than did the others. Stopouts perceived the community in which they grew up as less friendly and close than did persisters and d/t's. They were also less apt to describe their families as loyal and fun and more likely to describe them as hostile than were the other groups. Stopouts also perceived that their relationships with their fathers and siblings were not as warm and close as were indicated by persisters and d/t's.

In light of these differences, it is not difficult to understand why these students would leave the University. What is of interest is why they returned! Perhaps their departure and return is related to their creativity and independence. Their self-ratings indicate that they were the most creative and independent in thought of the three groups. They enjoyed creating and/or appreciated poetry, music and art to a greater extent than did the others. Artistic competence contributed more and material possessions contributed less to a sense of self-satisfaction for the stopouts than for d/t's and persisters. They rated themselves higher in ability to cope with loneliness than did the other two groups.

Stopouts seemed to have had more support systems while in high school than did persisters and d/t's. More of the stopouts' teachers were interested in them as individuals and more of their classmates respected them. Perhaps the combination of support, creativity and independence in thought enabled these students to leave the University, to sort out their purposes and desires, and then return, establishing more fulfilling relationships with the University.

It seems like the characteristics that were revealed by the differences in responses among the three retention groups could have been amplified by identification of those students who transferred to another institution and those who no longer attended any college or university. Those two groups of students may be markedly different and their identification is necessary before their respective characteristics can be determined and programs to assist them designed and implemented.

FRESHMAN MAJOR CHOICES

Information about retention of freshmen at SUNY/B relative to their initial interest in a major can be important to departments and to the University. As previously indicated, the retention status of the 1973 entering freshmen after four years was 59 percent persisters, 36 percent dropouts/transfers (d/t's), and 5 percent stopouts. Freshmen who indicated that they intended to major in the School of Management or in the Faculty of Engineering, particularly Engineering Science and Electrical Engineering, had substantially higher persistence rates than average for the total group. Students who had intended a major in the Faculty of Arts and Letters, especially English, were more likely to dropout, transfer, or stopout. Freshmen whose choices of major when entering college were Medical Technology, Biochemistry, Computer Sciences, Physics and Astronomy, and Psychology were also more likely than students in general to dropout, transfer, or stopout, while freshmen whose choice was history were more likely to persist.

The attrition rate of the University could be lowered and, perhaps more importantly, the attrition rates of individual departments could be changed by early identification of freshmen interested in those fields and cultivation of relationships with those students. Freshmen interested in each department can be identified in the summer before they enter the University by information submitted to the Office of Admissions and Records and Academic Advisement. Relationships between those interested students and the faculty, staff, and administrators of the respective departments could be established so that information can be exchanged, friendships formed and support systems built. These networks of communication and support could help not only in the retention of students but also in providing more detailed information regarding the reasons for stopping out, dropping out and transferring associated with each department.